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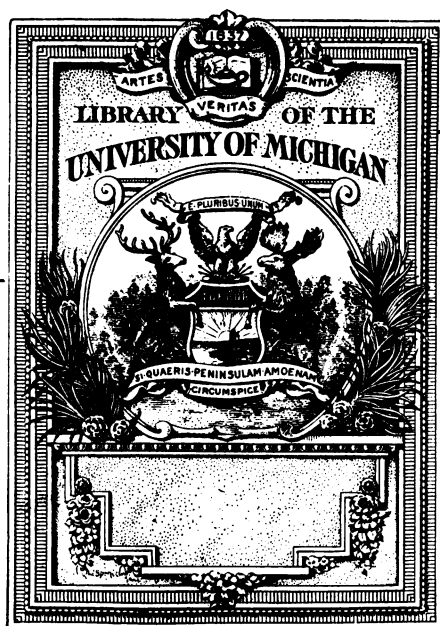
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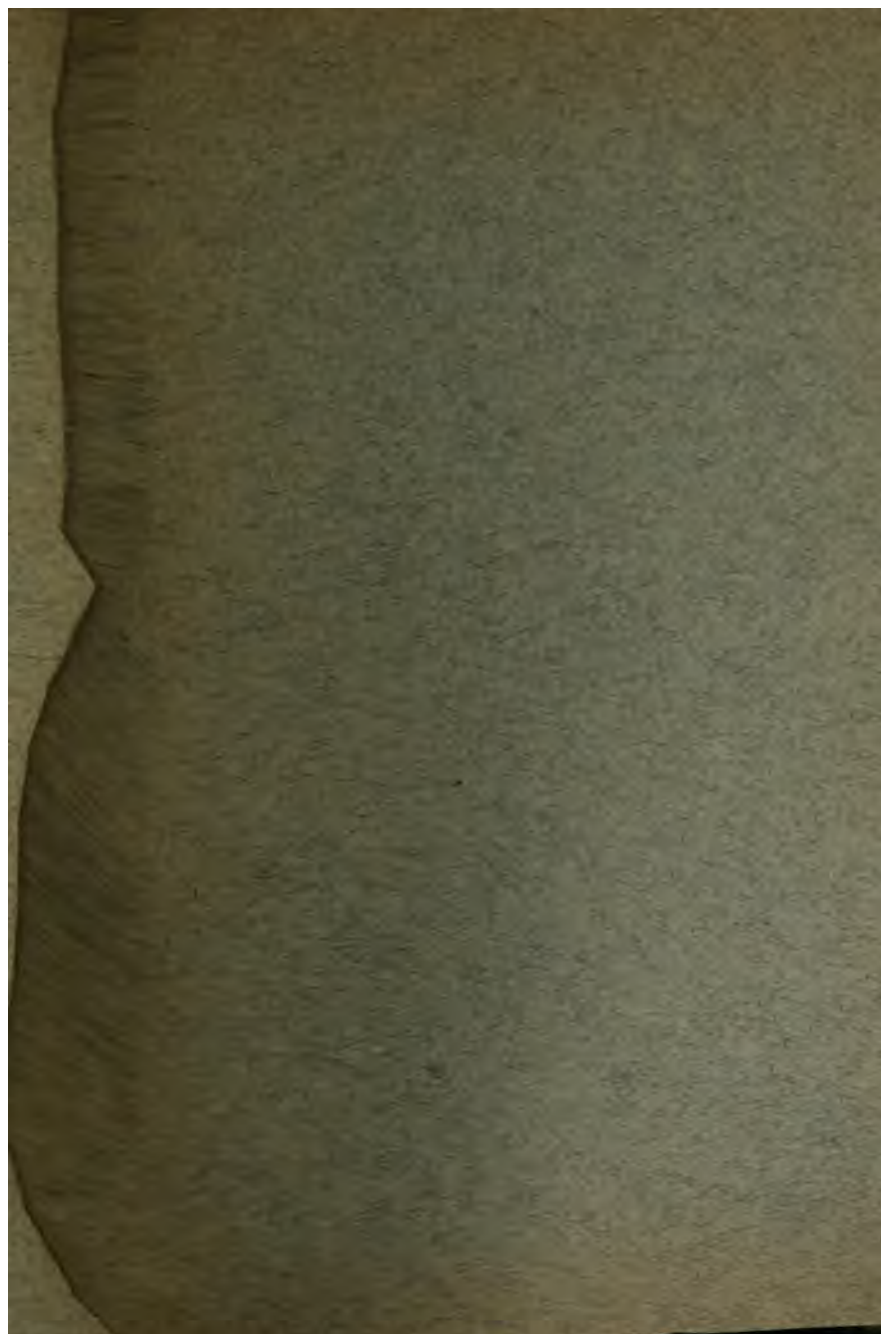
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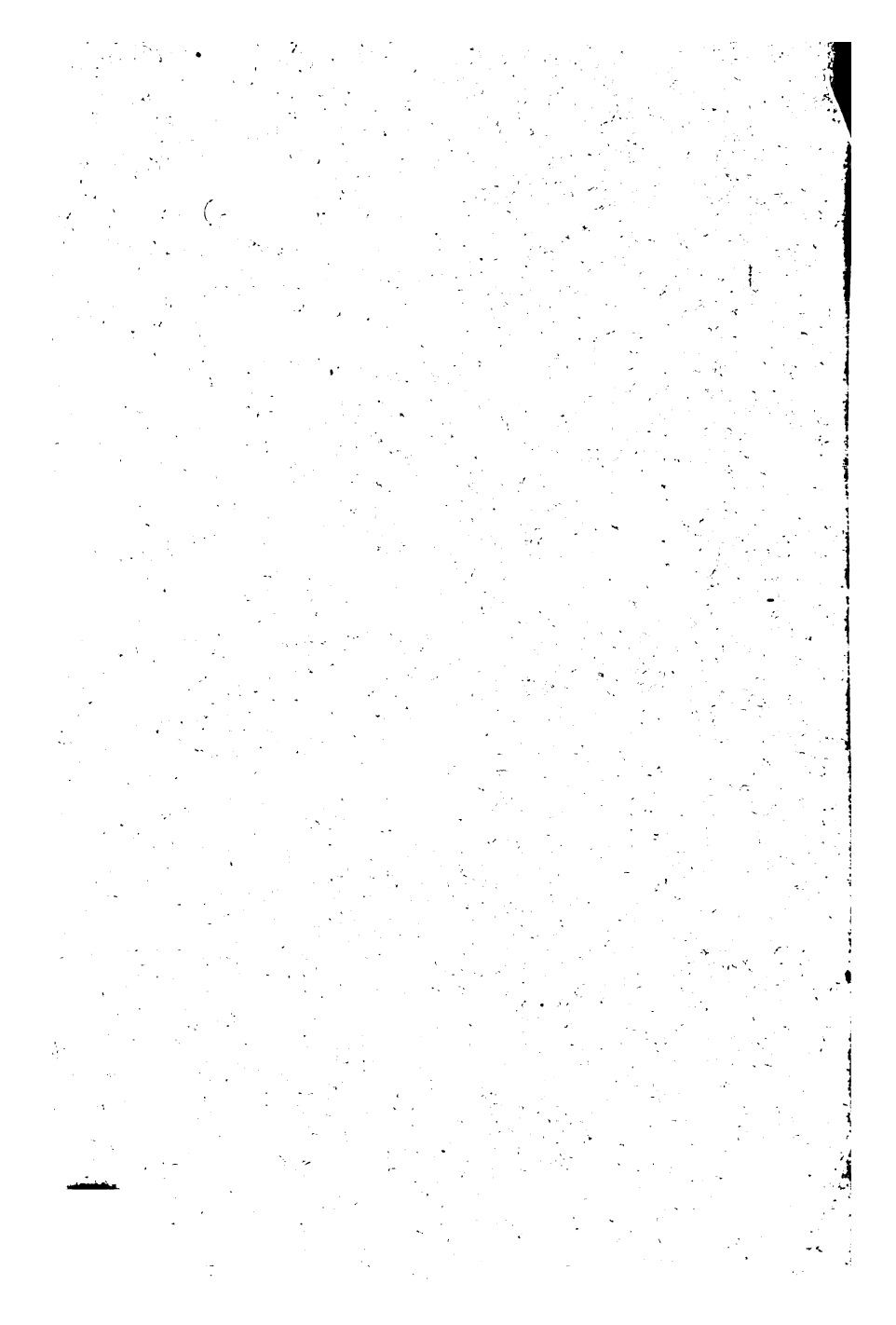


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OUR MANIFOLD NATURE

STORIES FROM LIFE

BY

SARAH GRAND

AUTHOR OF

IDEALA, A STUDY FROM LIFE, THE HEAVENLY TWINS, ETC.



NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

THESE stories are simply what they profess to be—studies from life. They appeared originally in magazines, some of them in a more or less unsatisfactory condition, having been mutilated for convenience of space, or in order to remove from them any idea of unusual import. Successful magazines dig deep grooves for themselves, and anything that does not fit into these is shunned as dangerous. Once established, they become for the most part unprogressive, neither leading nor following, but continuing to offer us the kind of thing that pleased our parents. Consequently they cease to appeal to us, and finally expire in a resolute effort to resist any attempt to induce them to air the grievances, touch upon the interests, or meet the special demands generally of the present generation. Diffident young writers, full of the force which is carrying us onward and upward, and cruelly perplexed between what they perceive and which those in authority insist that they ought to be perceiving, crawl along in them on feet of lead until the restraint becomes unbearable, and then they break out on their own account in new directions, and their success proves to be the death-blow of their oppressors. The old order changeth in this

as in all else. We are growing and learning to walk, and must have room to tumble about in; if those who are left to find out for themselves how to do it have the most falls, they are also the strongest eventually. There is more to be done than our ancestors did, and more to find out than they ever discovered. Many thanks to them, nevertheless, for all that we owe them.

Fiction has always been held to be at its best when it was true to life. To be true to life seemed, therefore, to be the noblest ambition of an author, and this has led in our day to an effort to go beyond the mere semblance and grasp the reality of life. But those who try it are immediately met with the objection that their work is inartistic. Fiction is found fault with because it is not fact, and fact because it is not fiction. It is the old story of the man, the boy, and the donkey. Personally, I think the only art worth cultivating is the art to be interesting. If a book is readable, it is churlish to object to it because it has not been made so by methods which succeeded in somebody else's work. To "make school" is doubtless gratifying to an author as a proof of success; but all that imitators make is much monotony for the reader. A novel, it seems to me, should be like life itself—an unfolding, and not a regular structure; but at the same time I recognise that in many moods, and to many minds only artificial regularity is acceptable. That form was the outcome of a day which we have not yet done with.

But there is one thing which strikes me as significant, and it may be instructive, with regard to these little essays of my own in the new direction, and that is that it is not the embellishments, but the literal facts, which

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have been attacked by the critics as "melodramatic" and "altogether impossible"—as, for instance, in *The Yellow Leaf*. There is no fiction whatever in *Evangeline's* story. It began, continued, and ended exactly as described, yet nearly every one has fallen foul of the conclusion as being improbable, especially for the reasons which are shown to have led up to it. This would seem to indicate that, in order to be convincing, a study from life must be a garnished interpretation rather than a literal translation. An actor has to paint his face to make it look natural in the glare of the footlights, and some analogous process must be resorted to by the writer who would produce the effect of life in his work. We are accustomed to the false and conventional in this branch of art as we are to the distorted figure of a fashionable woman, and, consequently, when truth and nature are presented to us, they strike us at first as strange; we do not recognise them, and we do not like them.

These studies were as experiments, and they now appear for the first time, unmutilated as well as carefully revised.

SARAH GRAND.

February, 1894.

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EUGENIA.

I.

I AM a humble artist, studying always in the life-school of the world, blinking nothing that goes to the making or marring of life, more especially to the marring of it, for if we would make it lovely, we must know exactly the nature of the diseases that disfigure it, and experiment upon them until we discover the great specific which, when properly applied, shall remedy all that. And it so happened that, in order to be accurate in every detail of a work upon which I was then engaged, I required to study human nature, as it appears behind the scenes, at the time of night when that part of a theatre is most characteristically crowded with the company in costume, and such visitors as are admitted. A brother of mine made the necessary arrangements for me, and was so good as to escort me himself, the leading managers, to whom he had explained my difficulty, having most courteously allowed me free access for my purpose. I have only to mention here one of the numerous little items of interest I noted at the time. It happened at the beginning of the enterprise when everything was new and strange, and while the incident itself, although trivial, remains distinctly impressed upon my mind, the surround-

ing details, doubtless because of their number and novelty, escape me for the most part, as in a well-balanced picture when all is unobtrusive, save the main idea; but I remember that we were wedged in a crowd of theatrical characters variously and even fantastically attired as if for a fancy-dress ball, and that the clatter of tongues was bewildering. Rank odours of a variety of scents saluted one's afflicted nostrils on all sides. This way white rose flowed from a fan, which a much-bedizened, vulgarly handsome daughter of the people was waving over a repulsively dissipated-looking young man in evening dress who was sprawling disrespectfully on a couch. On the other side patchouly polluted the air, and wood violet on a nymph in front of us was waging war with the whisky and *eau de Cologne* which were being wafted abroad by an old unvenerable man who was essaying to ogle with dim watery eyes, and to simper with loose lips that were too tremulous to respond simultaneously to the weak-willed intention. Every affectation of society was apparent about us, but coarsened into caricature. Flirtations were more evident, and grosser in the conduct of them, than in Belgravia, and powder, paint, and paste-diamonds were flaunted more conspicuously. Tight lacing was also carried to a more painful extent. Women's voices shrilled loudly, the cockney accent predominating. Most of the things said struck me as being disagreeably personal and flippant, when not actually coarse and rude. The laughter was noisy and incessant, but mirthless, and although there was plenty of excitement in the assembly, there was obviously little if any genuine pleasure, and as to happiness, I could detect no line, even on the youngest face, to indicate it. The predominant expression

was one of anxiety, only relieved in the more callous by moments of sensual apathy. As a whole the scene remains impressed upon my mind as an unlovely travesty of much to which one becomes accustomed in society, but it possessed the attraction of repulsion for me, and I could have stood there studying all night.

My brother knew many of the people present, but I only saw one man with whom I was personally acquainted, and it so happened that I knew him well, for it was Brinkhampton, the eldest son of a near neighbour of ours in my childhood. The two families had always been intimate.

He was standing talking to some woman just behind me, and I recognised his voice before I saw him.

"I'm sure your waist's smaller than Kitty Green's," he was saying quite earnestly.

"Aow, nao, you flatter me," the lady responded nasally. "Only I daown't tight laice."

There was a little pause, then Brinkhampton asked: "What are you looking for?"

"My fan. I laid it on the taible."

"Here it is. Let me have the pleasure of fanning you."

"Pleasure, indeed! Aow, I saiy! What do you want, I'd like to knaw? With those sheep's eyes! I'm up to you——" And so on all up the gamut of the cheapest inanity, silly, sillier, and silliest.

I turned to look at the lady, expecting to see something so satisfying to the eye of man that no other sense asked for anything, but she struck me as being a joyless antique, largely proportioned, well-preserved, and still able to affect a sprightliness she must have been far from

feeling spontaneously at that time of life. "That was the celebrated Sylvia," my brother told me as we came away.

"Wherein lieth the charm of her fatal fascination?" I asked.

"In *prestige*, which lasts longer than anything," he answered.

Out of the crowd and heat into the open air was an intoxicating transition, so great was the relief of it. I stood for some minutes on the pavement inhaling deep draughts of the freshness, and feeling as if I could never rid myself of the fever and fumes of that tawdry place.

II.

THE next night, driving home late from some entertainment, I was forced by a block in the traffic to sit for some time at the entrance to a popular "Theatre of Varieties." The lights blazed brilliantly, streaming across the pavement and into the carriage so that I could have read a book had I had one, and any of my friends seeing me there must have recognised me. The thought was amusing, particularly as I happened to be alone, but it was also a trifle embarrassing, because the carriage I was in belonged to friends with whom I was staying for the moment, austere people, whose livery was somewhat conspicuous, and as they were well-known to the public, there was always a chance of some enterprising reporter giving my friends the credit in the next day's news of having spent their evening at this garish resort. There was a fiendish racket going on all about me. In the road, men, women

and policemen, cabs, carts and carriages, seemed to be inextricably mixed; as if they had been performing some mystical rite with which they were imperfectly acquainted, the consequence of the confusion being great differences of opinion, and eager, angry, incessant, loud disputes. I was busy looking out on that side, improving my knowledge of the vulgar tongue by making notes in my own mind of any peculiar expressions used, when I heard myself addressed by name through the window on the "Theatre of Varieties" side of me, and at the same moment recognised Brinkhampton.

"I thought I could not be mistaken," he was saying, "however much I may be surprised by your choice of a place of amusement."

"From whence come you?" I answered tranquilly.

"From these same halls of light," he replied, indicating the gaudy place behind him; "and to tell you the truth," he added, in a worn-out, weary, satiated way—"I am sick of all that. I'm utterly used up. I think it's time for me to reform and marry. Can you recommend me to somebody who would make a nice wife? I suppose it wouldn't do for me to ask you for a seat in your carriage at this time of night?" This was said tentatively, but I crushed the aspiration with a decided shake of my head. Men have to have reputations nowadays, and I should have been sorry to have been seen alone with Brinkhampton under any circumstances—poor fellow—although I had known him all my life. "I know you are mighty particular," he went on, disconsolately, "but I assure you I'm thoroughly in earnest this time. Let me come and tell you all about it."

As he blocked up the whole of the window, the fact that he was reeking of tobacco and stimulants could not fail to impress me unpleasantly, and his somewhat bloated features, inflamed eyes, and dissipated appearance generally rendered him still more unattractive to my fastidious mind; so, to get rid of him, I told him that I should be "at home" next day, and if he came early enough, he might find me alone for a few minutes. I quite expected he would have no recollection of the engagement, but to my surprise he arrived, and rather sooner too than was altogether convenient.

It was evident from the way he was dressed, that the matter had cost him some thought; but no care could conceal the "used-up" look about his eyes, nor produce a deceptive tinge of health on the opaque sallow of his cheeks. The effort had not been wanting, his valet having obviously done his best, but it is only a fresh and healthy skin that really takes paint and powder well; the transparency once lost, artificial attempts to restore it show on the surface like a light layer of dust on standing water. But he was a young man still, and a good-looking one too, of the big coarse-moustached type, a typical guardsman, broad shouldered, and so apparently strong that a casual acquaintance would never have suspected flabby muscular tissue discounted by alcohol. He had a pleasant voice, and his manners were easy and unaffected, if a trifle too candidly self-complacent. With the old-fashioned sort of society-woman he was a favourite, and I confess I liked him well enough in a way myself, but then I had acquired the habit of liking him when we were children together.

"Well, and so you are inclined to marry and settle?" I said, as soon as we were seated.

"Not merely inclined," he answered, "I am quite determined. I've had a good time, don't you know, rather too much of a good time if anything, and now I feel it would be better for me to settle; and I want something nice and young and fresh, with money, for a wife, so that I may repair all my errors at once; some one who has lived all her life at the back of beyond, never been anywhere nor seen anyone to speak of, and is refreshingly unsophisticated enough to mistake the first man who proposes to her for an unsullied hero of romance. And I mean to be that man, don't you see?"

"But where do I come into this delightfully delicate, original plan?" I drily inquired.

"Well, you go a good deal to country houses," he answered, with what might have been either a dash of diffidence or a shade of anxiety in his manner. "You must have met the kind of girl I want—good-looking, you know, with an ivory skin and—and money. Don't jeer at me. I'm in earnest."

I composed my countenance, and took time to reflect. How to decline to help him without hurting his feelings was the difficulty. There used to be a superstition in society, that a man could at any time repair the errors of his youth by making a good match, and there are women still who will introduce "used-up" brothers and so on to their girl friends as eligible husbands; but I belong to the party of progress myself, and would not under any circumstances have done such a thing. I had not the courage of my opinions, however, at that time to the ex-

tent of saying so bluntly, and therefore I "smiling passed the question by;" but as I had not absolutely refused, he chose to take it that I would help him if I could, and thereupon he thanked me with effusion, and I could see that he was more than satisfied, for it was as if a load of care had been lifted from his mind and left him lighter-hearted.

III.

THAT summer saw me seated one afternoon in a shady nook on a cliff in the north, overlooking the sea. Behind me there was a lovely stretch of country, hill and dale, field and forest, with the gold of ripening grain, the scarlet glint of intrusive poppies, and the manifold tints of green, shooting to gray, and even to yellow and brown in the woods, where the earlier trees were already assuming a dash of their autumn bravery. Before me was the mildly murmurous unrest of rippling wavelets, bursting with incessant merriment as they feigned to fly from the pursuit of the incoming tide, which flowed on always swiftly over the long level reaches of the sandy shore. It was a scene to soothe and enlighten, for such solitudes people the mind with goodly companies of glad ideas, and just and vigorous thoughts. My meditations were not long uninterrupted that day, however, for in the most absorbing midst of them I was aroused by the surprised enunciation of my own name, and, on looking up, I discovered Brinkhampton staring at me.

"Well!" I ejaculated. "What are you doing here?"

"Potting rabbits," he answered, sententiously. "I have taken the shooting."

"You mean to be in time for it, apparently."

"Oh, I thought I'd come and amuse myself with the rabbits. It's the fresh air I want really, you see. My nerves have all gone to pieces. I want to be out of sinner's ways for awhile, and I knew fellows wouldn't come bothering much before September. I've taken the shooting with leave to live about here for six months if it suits me. In the absence of a lord, the lady of the manor lets the right, I understand."

"Do you know her?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "I have not that pleasure. Do you?"

"I am staying with her now."

Then there was a pause, during which Brinkhampton carefully examined his gun, lock, stock, and barrel. "It's a nice place," he remarked at last, glancing about him comprehensively. "Is the lady as goodly as her acres?"

"Has she 'an ivory skin' do you mean? You may judge for yourself, for behold her approach down yonder forest glade, hatless, gloveless, robed in white, with a purple parasol shielding the burnished brightness of her lovely tresses from the too ardent kisses of the sun."

Brinkhampton stared with interest.

"She's quite young!" he exclaimed.

"Twenty-one exactly," I replied.

He was about to say something else, but Eugenia had come up to us by this time, and I hastened to present them to each other.

"It is you who have taken my shooting off my hands this year, I suppose," Eugenia said, glancing at his gun.

"So I have just learnt," he answered, looking into her

sweet grave face with undisguised interest and admiration.

"I hope you will find it worth your while," she said. "The coverts are pretty well stocked this year, I believe. Where have you put up?"

"At the village inn," he answered with a grimace.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "then you must be uncomfortable. When I heard you were coming alone, I hoped you had friends in the neighbourhood with whom you would stay."

"It so happens that I know nobody here as yet," he replied. "But I really must get some decenter accommodation."

"Why not come to the hall?" Eugenia asked easily. "It would be a kindness to help us to occupy a little more of it. The house has suffered from having been so long shut up."

The frank assurance of her manner seemed to surprise him. He glanced at her gloveless left hand to see if perchance she was married, and he confessed to me afterwards he could not quite class her when he found she wore no wedding-ring, being "puzzled to make out whether she was Americanized, unsophisticated, or not quite the right form, don't you know." But at any rate the offer was a good one.

"I should be afraid of intruding," he feebly deprecated.

"No fear of that," she answered smiling; then appealing to me, she added: "I am sure I may say we shall both be glad to see you. We dine at half-past seven."

We smartened ourselves up that evening somewhat in honour of the young man, and I noticed that he and Eugenia were studying each other with a certain pleased intentness which augured well for their future friendliness. Certainly his coming had enlivened Eugenia as the coming of an eligible should enliven a girl, and I waited with interest to hear what she had to say about him. He had been looking his best when they met in the afternoon, the rough tweed shooting suit he wore being just of the cut and colour best adapted to conceal his defects, but his evening dress was altogether too calculated for effect, too evidently the outcome of serious attention to be manly. There was more than a suspicion of some horrid expensive scent about him, and his cheeks had a velvety texture which was cruelly suggestive of powder—*apropos* of all of which Eugenia remarked to me afterwards in a mysterious whisper laughingly: "I suspect stays." But that was all she said about him, somewhat to my surprise, for I should have expected that the advent of a man of that kind would have caused a flutter of curiosity at least in the heart of a country girl. However in such a case not asking questions is no proof of an absence of interest.

IV.

EUGENIA and I breakfasted at half-past eight next morning, but Brinkhampton did not appear until after ten. It was Sunday, and we were in the breakfast-room ready dressed for church when he entered.

"What will you have?" Eugenia, as hostess, asked him, thinking of tea, coffee or chocolate.

"Aw," he answered, looking round to the sideboard, "claret or hock, I really don't care which."

Eugenia ordered both to be brought, and then we hurried away to church.

In the middle of the Litany Brinkhampton entered, and, lounging down the aisle with conspicuous deliberation, took a side seat from which he could survey us all at his ease. He was dressed, as usual, with extreme attention to detail, in the manner most approved for the occasion, and it was certainly not his fault if the latest thing in frock coats, as worn by himself, appeared to be ridiculously singular to the rest of the congregation in contrast to the archaic cut to which their eyes were accustomed. He looked hard at Eugenia from the moment he took his seat, but she was deep in her devotions, and took not the slightest notice of him.

It was a quaint, old-fashioned little church, only attended as a rule by tenants on the estates and the household at the hall, close to which it was so situated as to seem more of a private chapel than a public place of worship. All about us, in the midst of the quiet people, Eugenia's ancestors were taking their long rest. Knight and dame, lord and lady, soldier, sailor, and priest, good and bad, looked down upon us or appeared prone in effigies of stone upon old tombs, while tablets of brass or marble recorded the brave deeds of one, the learning of another, the statesmanship of a third, and so on, ascribing every available virtue to each. I have often seen Eugenia beguiling the tedious sermon-time by studying these tablets, and always imagined her ignorant of the true characters of her notorious ancestors, idealizing them all, and being elevated

by the deep interest, the natural affection, and the innate reverence she must feel for those to whom she attributed all that was best about her.

She was peculiarly situated, being one of a long line of dominant women, the estates having descended from mother to daughter in regular succession, in accordance with a curse which had been laid upon all heirs male of the family forever—so it was said—or, at all events, until such time as an heiress should contrive to expiate the crime for which the sons of her house were (somewhat unfairly, as it seems to our modern ideas of justice) doomed to suffer. Eugenia had been left an orphan at an early age, and brought up in the midst of a people who still clung fervently to all the old-world superstitions. I did not know how much of these she accepted literally, but I always attributed a certain dignity and general air as of one who is not to be trifled with, which settled upon her early, to the romantic associations of the place, and her faith in those who had gone before. They, her people, having been noble, it was proper that she also should be self-respecting and noble too—so, at least, I read her reflections when I watched her weighing the worth of those epitaphs in her own mind Sunday after Sunday as she grew to girlhood, and I fancied that the gentle gravity, which gradually became the habitual expression of her countenance in repose, was due to thoughts like these.

This morning, however, she was not thinking of her ancestors in the pauses of the service. When her eyes wandered at all it was to the green graves in the churchyard, and the old trees that sheltered them. The day was warm and bright, and through the open windows the

scented summer air streamed in upon her, and also there came an incessant twittering of birds, the coo of a wood-pigeon now and then, and the hoarse caws of rooks—not as interruptions to the service, however, but rather as an accustomed addition to it, the whole, with the rural people, sober in dress, and solemnly attentive in their demeanour, producing an impression of remoteness from the world and proportionate nearness to nature, which was inexpressibly soothing. Even Brinkhampton's starved soul expanded for the moment just enough to let him feel some joy in life—something sufficiently worth having to make him forget for once to measure time with a view to shortening it, or “passing” it, as is the insane fashion of those who have not learnt to live.

When the service was over he walked on with me to the house, Eugenia having lingered in the porch talking to the people.

“I have found my ideal!” he exclaimed fervently, as soon as we were alone.

“Ivory skin and all?”

“Don't be malicious,” he answered. “I'm in earnest. But I've a bone to pick with you. You seem to have forgotten your promise to me. Why did you not tell me of this lovely lady hidden away here in the hills?”

“For the reason you mention,” I answered coolly. “I had forgotten your request.”

“How could you; when she is so exactly what I asked you to find for me too! But tell me about her. How does she come to be so situated—here, you know, like this?”

“She is in a somewhat unusual position,” I answered.

"She has no relation in the whole world but an old uncle—who was once in your regiment, by the way. All her own people died in her infancy, and she has been brought up here principally by a very charming and excellent woman who came to be her governess, and has remained to be a mother to her. She is away just now, and I am here on duty partly, looking after Eugenia, you know, during her absence. The property's nice, is it not? It was a good deal encumbered by debts, but has been well nursed during Eugenia's long minority, and she is bent upon economy herself until it is cleared."

"Then she really is sole heiress?" he observed, looking about him with an air of complete satisfaction, as if he already had a proprietary right to the place.

"Sole inheritress, I should say. Half the neighbourhood is hers."

"But why should she be buried here still?" he asked, then added: "But I am glad she has been. I should like to see her wonder when she enters the great world! her delight when she finds what it really is to be mistress of means, with jewels and lace, a centre of attraction! She can't know what her wealth is worth a bit until she comes into competition with other women and finds herself able to eclipse them."

This noble thought seemed to enchant him, and I could see he was hugging himself already on the prospect of her brilliant social success, and the glory which it would reflect upon himself.

I made him no answer because I had determined to be neutral. Here were the conventional elements of most romances, youth, beauty, rank, wealth, experienced man,

inexperienced girl—but not a commonplace girl either. There was no knowing exactly how she would act under the circumstances, and the uncertainty was great enough to relieve the story from insipidity. I thought it would be interesting to watch the plot unfold, and I was anxious to see for myself how this *Ouidaesque* hero would really strike a modern maiden with ideas of her own.

That kind of man is accustomed to the Sylvias in and out of society, who will sell their immortal souls for gew-gaws, and his mind had probably continued to divert him with promises of the irresistible attraction of such things when used with women as an argument to influence their feelings, for at our early Sunday dinner he said a good deal about diamonds, to which Eugenia listened with evident interest. She was highly intelligent, and at an age when the opposite point of view is always surprising. She was not in the habit of saying much, however. Brinkhampton was voluble, and she heard him out, then answered with a smile and in a casual tone: "You seem to be fond of diamonds. I have a lot upstairs somewhere if you would like to see them. I used to delight in them myself for their glitter when I was a child, but now of course I only value them for the sake of any little family history that attaches to them."

Brinkhampton stared at her, not at all perceiving that the art of being agreeable to a Sylvia is not always effectual with other girls, and divided between the pleasing thought that Eugenia would appreciate her advantages better by-and-by, when she came into competition with other women, and had opportunities of testing the value of diamonds as an aid to eclipsing them, and an uncom-

fortable though vague perception of the unpleasant possibility of a peculiar personal equation "that might by some mischance be swaying her taste eccentrically in the matter."

Out in the grounds later he began to fear that there was not much to amuse her, that she must often find it very dull in this benighted country place, whereupon she made big eyes of astonishment at him, and ejaculating "dull!" glanced comprehensively at the surrounding wonders of sky, and sea, and shore, then added, "where can dulness come into a life like mine?"

The question nonplussed him for the moment. To be so unsophisticated as not even to have the slightest conception of the better life which includes shopping in London and the full swing of everything there in the season, was a little too much. "But," as he remarked to me afterwards, "all this enhances the charm, don't you know; it's so fresh, and it will be fun to see how her views change as her mind is enlarged by intercourse with the world, and to hear what she thinks by-and-by of this rural retreat."

"But do you suppose she has any mind?" I ventured.

"Oh, dear, yes," he answered. "Quite enough for a woman, especially if she's to be one's wife. A clever woman is apt to have 'views' and that sort of thing, and lead a man a dance generally. What one wants in a wife is something nice to look at and agreeable to caress when one's in the mood, with average intelligence of course, but conventional ideas."

"Are you going to have anybody down for the shooting?"

"Well, I don't know," he answered. "That was my idea at first. But my primary motive was to get away from everybody and recruit. I told you in town. I've had too good a time, and I'm quite used up. My nerve's gone to that extent that I'm afraid to fire my own gun if I think about it. It would certainly be better for me to settle, and the more I see of the place the more I like it. The air's delicious, and suits me too. I'm beginning to revive already."

He had just come in from "potting" rabbits, and we were sitting on a seat in the garden, he nursing his gun, when he said this, and after he had spoken he reflected a little, then added: "It would suit me down to the ground to have this quiet retreat and Eugenia to come to whenever I felt played out, as I am now."

"Then you've abandoned the idea of making a society woman of her?"

"Oh, not at all. But I should require her to be here when I'm otherwise engaged, and can't look after her, don't you know?"

I admired his foresight, it being evident that he was preparing, with playful toleration of his own weakness, to be tempted back now and then to gloat on Sylvia's superabundant flesh, and at the same time was thinking how refreshing it would be, when that kind of thing palled upon him, to return to the rarefied atmosphere which surrounded the lily of love whom he was also anxious to secure.

V.

THEIR acquaintance rapidly ripened into intimacy, and very soon I perceived that they had adopted that tone of light banter which enables young people to say so much to each other. The playful controversy turned for the most part on the relative merits of town and country, and the brilliancy and wit of society compared with the petty concerns which Brinkhampton held to be all there was to discuss in a neighbourhood like this.

"I am sure," he maintained, "you would like to hear people talk cleverly."

"I would much rather hear them talk kindly," she answered.

She was always ready with some such response, but he soon flattered himself that her perversity was a coquettish assumption to pique him, and would try to provoke her in return by assuring her that she would know better when she was older.

The brightness which I had noticed on the first evening of the coming of the young man into Eugenia's quiet life did not diminish, but on the contrary increased if anything with the ripening of their acquaintance. Her nature was naturally joyous, and under Brinkhampton's influence her manner, while losing none of its dignified simplicity, became more girlishly playful, which was a distinct improvement, for until now she had been apt to display a too great earnestness for her age. Nothing in her attitude, however, gave me the slightest clue to her feelings for him. I did not know in the least whether she had ever thought of him as a possible lover or not.

With him it was quite different. He talked of her incessantly, and of what he called his "love" for her. He even got so far as to consider the settlements, and if there would be ready money enough in hand at the time of the marriage to pay off his innumerable debts and start them clear, because it would be a pity to have to sell out anything, don't you know. The "love" and the lucre longings mixed in his conversation in curiously exact proportions, but still the frank boyishness of it all was taking.

It was hot harvest weather; radiant mornings turning to turquoise and pearl-grey noons, and always exquisite amethyst seas—an ideal love-time, and it would have been strange if it had failed altogether of its effect upon two young people so thrown together. The first positive sign of serious feeling I detected in Brinkhampton was an improvement in his habits. On Sunday morning he had breakfasted between ten and eleven, on Wednesday he was up at seven o'clock. Eugenia and I were just starting for the meadows with baskets to gather mushrooms for breakfast when he appeared. He volunteered to accompany us, and wanted to carry our baskets, but Eugenia said that would only be robbing us of our occupation, and suggested that he should have one of his own.

We straggled down the road after each other. The morning was deliciously fresh, and so was Eugenia. Brinkhampton could not take his eyes off her, and, although she never glanced at him, I knew by the smile that constantly hovered about her mouth, the brightness of her eyes, the slightly heightened colour on her delicate cheeks, and the buoyancy of her step, that she was aware of his earnest gaze, and animated by his admiration. They

chatted incessantly, disagreeing generally, but it was impossible to tell whether they were pulling apart or only arriving at a better understanding. There was sufficient difference of opinion to read both ways, but owing to the cheerful playfulness of the tone in which it was all expressed, it was hard to determine how much either of them really meant.

Cock pheasants crowed in the coverts as we passed, rabbits ran nimbly out of the way. We crossed a limpid trout stream in a little wood, and, coming out into the open ground again, found ourselves on the edge of the cliff in full view of the sun-smitten sea. The many-murmurous voice of ocean was in our ears, the vital breath of it upon our cheeks. Eugenia, standing on the brink with longing eyes, looked out first over the moving waters into the morning mist where the sea-birds revel, then turned to Brinkhampton brightly, and asked: "Did you ever see anything like this in Bond Street?"

Brinkhampton sighed sentimentally, but wisely held his peace.

It was a high cliff upon which we were standing, and there was a narrow precipitous winding path, cut out of the chalk and very dangerous-looking, running down to the beach.

"Let us go back by the sands," Eugenia exclaimed, our baskets being full by this time, and away she went, nimbly as a goat, I following without a thought. At the bottom we looked back, and discovered Brinkhampton at one of the bends about half-way down leaning against the cliff—I had almost said clinging to it.

"Anything the matter?" Eugenia cried.

"I'm stuck," he answered.

"How thoughtless of me," I exclaimed, and ran back to help him. He was pale, and clutched my hand eagerly when I offered it to him.

"You see I have not exaggerated," he said, dejectedly. "I've no nerve left for anything. I'm used up. It's high time I settled."

My hand, however, and also perhaps the now familiar formula, helped to restore his confidence, and we got down together pretty creditably. I could see that Brinkhampton expected some sympathy for his giddiness, but Eugenia was throwing stones into the water unconcernedly when we rejoined her, and went on without a word as if nothing had happened. Near the house a tall good-looking young man of distinguished appearance met us.

"There's Saxon," Eugenia exclaimed when he came in sight, and greeted him familiarly, but did not introduce him to Brinkhampton.

I knew him of old, and asked him why he had not been to see me.

"We have had to make the most of this harvest weather," he answered. "But I shall be able to call soon now, I hope, if I may."

"Yes, do come, Saxon," Eugenia exclaimed. "There are ever so many things I want to consult you about."

"Who was that?" Brinkhampton asked afterwards.

"Saxon Wake, a friend of my youth," Eugenia answered lightly. "His people have been here as long as we have. They were Yeoman farmers, but now they own a part of what were our estates."

"The yokel has passable manners," Brinkhampton

said, patronisingly. "I suppose he picks up a little veneer at race-meetings and hunt-breakfasts."

"The yokel was a wrangler of his year," Eugenia answered icily.

Brinkhampton said no more. He had not taken any degree himself.

VI.

WE had a private letter-bag at the hall which was brought in for Eugenia to unlock every morning, and she usually distributed the letters herself. That day she took out one among others that instantly filled the room with some strong scent of which it was reeking. "Ugh!" she exclaimed; "after the open air, how coarse this is. Who can it be for? You,"—to Brinkhampton. "It savours of 'Society' to me,—'the thick of life,'—'excitement!' but my rustic nose is unequal to the demands of such an assault. Please take it!"

Brinkhampton glanced at the superscription as she handed him the note, and his countenance expressed "Faugh!" as clearly as a countenance can speak. He was about to put the note in his pocket, but changed his mind, and laid it beside his plate. It had occurred to him that he might draw suggestions of the mysterious "fuller" life of a man from it with which to enhance his *prestige* with this little country girl.

"It is from Sylvia," he observed.

"The burlesque actress?" Eugenia asked. "I suppose you know numbers of people of that kind."

He smiled complacently.

"You must find it very different being here with us," she remarked.

"Of course it is a change," he confessed.

"Yes," she answered, thoughtfully. "But I wonder you can endure it, even for a change."

"Oh, one would endure a good deal for the sake of some people," he blundered.

I noticed that the shooting claimed less and less of his attention. He did not even make a pretence of going out to-day, and Eugenia herself had scarcely paid a visit, or had anyone at the house since his arrival. The young man, set in sunshine with an accompaniment of lovely languid autumn weather, had sufficed so far for an absorbing interest, but now at last as we loitered in the dining-room after lunch she raised that question of What shall we do? which usually implies the palling of an old pleasure and a desire for something new.

She was sitting on the sill of one of the wide-open windows with her feet on the deep-cushioned window-seat, and as she spoke there was a sound of horse's feet spattering through the gravel below.

"Here's Saxon!" she exclaimed with animation. "Saxon, I'm delighted to see you. We want something to do this afternoon. Come and consult."

"Why not have out the coach, drive to Greenwood Sound, send the saddle-horses by the short cut across the fields to wait for you there, and race the tide home round Towindard Head," Saxon rejoined from below. "The tide will be just right for the ride if you get off in half an hour."

"Excellent!" Eugenia exclaimed. "But you must

come with us, Saxon. One gentleman is not enough for two ladies, and Lord Brinkhampton does not know the coast. Do ride round to the stables and order the coach and despatch Gould with the horses while we are putting on our habits. Come, boot and spur, my lord," she called to Brinkhampton as she dragged me from the room.

"He doesn't look very gracious about it," she said, as we ran upstairs together, "and I expect he'll take an hour to adorn himself. I suppose I shall be obliged to let him drive. Saxon won't, I know. But I do wonder what kind of a whip he is. If he can't drive, however, he shan't pretend to, for I don't believe true womanliness consists in letting a man do badly what a woman can do well, simply because men generally are more accustomed to perform that particular exercise than women are. But let us hope he has forgotten to provide himself with the last thing in driving gloves. He would never use anything already out of date by a season."

This last little sarcasm, although playfully uttered, sounded significant, but if Brinkhampton had gone down in her estimation for any reason, he rose again when it came to offering him the reins, by the frank way in which he acknowledged he was no whip, and had never been able to handle a team in his life.

Contrary to our expectation, he was waiting for us in the porch when we went down, and was also, wonderful to relate, amicably discussing the points of the horses with Saxon. It was a smart turn-out, and doubtless the possession of it, by adding an important item to other evidences of Eugenia's many material attractions, had improved his humour.

VII.

BRINKHAMPTON sat beside Eugenia on the front seat, Saxon and I were behind them, and at the back were Baldwin, the old family coachman, and a groom with the coach-horn. The horses, dark glossy bays with black points, were mettlesome beasts. They danced down the drive as if unaware of the slight encumbrance of the coach and its load behind them. It was a wonderful thing to see Eugenia, a slender girl, almost standing against her high seat with her feet planted firmly in front of her, controlling the four great prancing creatures without apparent effort. One could not help calculating what the nerve-power must be behind such ease, and what the strength of the sinews which were masked by her "ivory skin." She never looked better than on that occasion. Her riding habit, clinging close, showed the perfection of her figure. The sun was still hot, and she wore, slightly tilted back, a low-crowned white sailor hat, the roundness of which set off the delicate oval of her cheeks. Her ripe red lips were slightly parted in a smile showing the white teeth between, her eyes danced in liquid light; one could trace the course of the blue veins beneath the transparent skin, and the fresh air and exertion had brought a brilliant colour to her cheeks. But for those with the inner eyes that see beneath the surface, there was more about her to attract than mere good looks and the ineffable charm of youth. There shone in her face the happy spirit that makes much of the smallest joy in life, and sees in the most obvious admiration of her friends only an evidence of their own good dispositions. There is

more beauty than character as a rule in the delicate curves and lineless smoothness of a young girl's face; but still, in studying Eugenia, one felt that, for all her soft voice and gentle courteous bearing, she was not a person to be trifled with. There are natures which may be taught but must not be dictated to, and hers was one of those.

She was, in fact, essentially a modern maiden, richly endowed with all womanly attributes, whose value is further enhanced by the strength which comes of the liberty to think, and of the education out of which is made the material for thought. With such women for the mothers of men, the English-speaking races should rule the world.

As he watched her, Brinkhampton's petty disdain of Saxon the yeoman sank into the background of his consciousness. One could see his countenance expand until he looked superlatively happy, as his delight in her loveliness gained upon him.

And Saxon, sitting beside me with his arms folded, thoughtfully watched her too, but there was a somewhat sad expression on his handsome face. They had been playfellows, but still he saw in Brinkhampton only what was appropriate to her station in the way of a suitor, and there was no bitterness in him. It was what he had all along prepared himself to be resigned to eventually. Brinkhampton himself was not so proudly conscious of the difference of position as Saxon was; but Brinkhampton was accustomed to consider only his own interests in regard to women, and naturally assumed that Saxon was equally inferior.

It was ten miles from Towindard Hall to Greenwood Sound, but the horses seemed to have covered the ground

in no time, for it was still early in the afternoon when we halted in a shady lane between the river on our left, seen through a frame of foliage, and a high bank on our right, a green bank dotted with clumps of fern, and crowned with trees, beneath which sheep were quietly browsing. No one would have suspected that we were in the near neighbourhood of the treacherous ocean and a dangerous shore. There was a deep glow as of approaching sunset upon the placid river, a babble of birds in the trees above us, and somewhere unseen, a cock crowed cheerily at intervals. The horses, only refreshed apparently by their ten miles' scamper, pawed the ground impatiently, tossed their heads till the harness jingled, and recognising their stable companions who were already awaiting us under the trees with their saddles on, saluted them with loud neighs joyously.

"We must make tea here, there is plenty of time," said Saxon, as he clambered down.

"Oh, how delightful!" Eugenia exclaimed. "I forgot all about tea. You always remember everything, Saxon."

She threw down the reins.

"Come," she said to Brinkhampton, "come and collect sticks."

Brinkhampton went of necessity, but he was not one of those men who readily adapt themselves to any position, and as he picked up the sticks his whole attitude was awkwardly condescending, and he evidently did not agree when Eugenia contended that it was half the fun on these expeditions to do all that kind of thing for one's self. I saw that she observed how he picked up the sticks by their driest ends, and held them away from him daintily;

but her countenance remained unruffled, and I could not tell if she saw anything ludicrous in such extreme fastidiousness. Stooping made Brinkhampton red in the face, and giddy, and he had to stop frequently to recover himself, and always when he did so, he looked about him haughtily as if he were asking nature to be so good as to observe that a Peer of the Realm was picking up sticks.

We soon had a big fire blazing in the shade, and while we were waiting for the kettle to boil, we lolled about on cushions taken from the coach, and by degrees were gained upon by the enchanting day, the heavenly quiet, and the associations of the place, so that insensibly our modern mood slipped from us, the charm of ancient days was on us, and we found ourselves a prey to thoughts of that which is not seen or known, but only felt.

"Is this Greenwood Sound?" Brinkhampton said suddenly.

"Yes," Eugenia answered, "and when I am here I am always overpowered with a strange feeling of remoteness. It is as if my kindred claimed me—not as if they came to me here, but as if they took me to themselves—to their own times. This is a spot which has been specially sanctified by the sins of my ancestors."

Brinkhampton asked her if she were superstitious.

"I don't know," she answered, in a surprised tone. "I never thought about it." Then she reflected a little. "But certainly," she added, "no son of the house has ever succeeded."

"Are these church lands then?" Brinkhampton asked.

"No, the tradition is older than that," she said. "By the way, isn't it evident they worshipped the Evil One of

old? Their cursings were so effectual, while their blessings were of such small avail. But, Saxon, tell the tale. You know it best."

"The country folks hereabouts preserve it in ballads," he answered unaffectedly. "They give the vague date of hundreds of years ago, when Towindard Hall was a castle owned by a miserly old earl. He was a direct ancestor of yours, as you know, and he had an only daughter whom he meant to barter for gold to the highest bidder when she should be old enough to marry. She was a girl of magnificent physique, with a spirit as fine as her form and features, and moreover she was dowered, says the legend, with caution, and the gift of silence, so that, when at last her father ordered her to prepare to marry a man she had hardly seen, and was not prepossessed by, she held her peace instead of raising useless objections, and waited until she should know more of him. It does not say that she ever really disliked him, but at that time a man had to have as much physical courage as he has nowadays to have moral courage to recommend him to a girl——"

"A man must have both," Eugenia put in, decidedly.

"Well, at any rate," Saxon pursued, "from what your ancestress saw of Lord Willoughby, her suitor, before they were married, she shrewdly suspected that he was a coward, 'unmeet with me to wed,' as the ballad says; but there was no getting out of the match, she being her father's chattel and entirely at his disposal. She determined, however, that before she settled down for life with the man, she would test his courage just to see who should be master; so she stipulated that on their wedding-day, he should let her drive him from Greenwood Sound (where

we are now), to Willoughby Chase (his place), by Towindard Head. He refused her nothing, the ballad says :

“The day broke cloudy, the wind was high,
The storm-clouds fought in a murky sky,
The wild waves whitened the sands with scud,
The sunset brightened the sky with blood.
O wild! O wild! Ah, well-a-day!
Does the bridegroom note that the bride is gay?

“The chariot stood at the castle door,
The hinds were holding the horses four,
The storm wind tosses the horses’ manes,
The bride has gathered the fluttering reins.
O wild! O wild! Ah, well-a-day!
Does the bridegroom note that the bride is gay?

“From Greenwood Sound to Willoughby Chase,
By Towindard Head in a chariot race,
Four horses racing the rising tide,
A white-faced bridegroom, a desp’rate bride.
O wild! O wild! Ah, well-a-day!
For the gale blows fierce in Towindard Bay.

“‘Now, good, my lord, though art pledged to race,
From Greenwood Sound to Willoughby Chase,
To race the tide round Towindard Head,
But methinks thou art frightened, my lord,’ she said.
O wild! O wild! Ah, well-a-day!
‘Crouch down on your knees at my feet and pray.’

“At Willoughby Chase there was dole that night,
The bride has arrived all scared and white,
And the four black steeds have reached the shore,
But the bridegroom cometh again no more.
O wild! O wild! Ah, well-a-day!
Lord Willoughby sleeps in Towindard Bay.”

"She had drowned him then," Brinkhampton exclaimed.

"So it was eventually supposed," Eugenia answered easily. It is customary to assume a modest tone with regard to the crimes committed by our remote ancestors, and not to boast about them on account of their misdeeds, however narrowly they may have escaped hanging, and Eugenia always alluded to this one in the most becomingly casual manner. "She was not suspected of having done so at first, however," she pursued. "It was believed to have been an accident, and so it may have been, for my greatest great-grandmother was evidently one of those people of strongly marked character and independent habits, around whose names all kinds of stories collect by degrees, until at last there are so many that they must have done something notable on every day of their lives in order to accomplish such an amount. By Lord Willoughby's death she became mistress of Willoughby Chase, and as she inherited Towindard also, she was in a powerful position for the times. She married again and became my ancestress, but of her second husband, my ancestor, nothing is known except that there was such a person. He was apparently one of those people who don't count."

"And is that all?" said Brinkhampton.

"No," Eugenia answered, "the most important part is yet to come. According to the story, everything succeeded with my remarkable ancestress during her life, but on her death-bed she was seen to be in sore distress of mind, and at last she sent for a priest, but exactly what she confessed to him was never revealed, only it was ob-

served that, when he left her, his eyes were wild and his cheeks were pale. And it is known that he had laid what he thought to be a curse on one daughter of the family in every generation. A celibate priest naturally did not understand women; he thought property and power would be a bane to us, so he condemned one of us to inherit the estates always, until such time as we should discover how to remove the curse!"

"And you have not done so yet?" Brinkhampton said.

"Nobody has ever tried that I know of," Eugenia answered naïvely. "It's rather hard on the boys, but if it had not been for the curse, there probably would not have been any property by this time."

"Churchman's justice is peculiar," I interjected. "I can't see upon what principle the unoffending innocents were condemned to death."

"But there was some sense in the penance which the priest prescribed for your ancestress," Saxon pursued. "He condemned her to drive her wild black horses against the rising tide with her cowering bridegroom crouching at her feet forever, or until such time as her troubled spirit should be released by one of her descendants—

"And so for evermore
Along the shore
She hears the swift wild surges roar,
For evermore she urges
Hot headstrong steeds to brave the roaring surges.
With tightened traces
Full speed she races—
And those who ride
Shall hear their thund'ring rush against the rising tide."

"But has anyone ever heard them?" Brinkhampton objected.

"We all have," I answered, whereupon he looked mystified, because he did not consider me superstitious—nor was he, oh dear no, not a bit!

This broke the spell. The tea was ready, and tea with cream and cakes and ravenous appetites brought us back incontinently to the most sceptical mood of our own day.

"But what exactly are we going to do?" Brinkhampton asked.

"Oh, just race the tide round Towindard Head," Eugenia answered casually. "If we are there first we shall get round easily, and find ourselves near home, but if the sea is before us, it complicates matters. What about the weather, Baldwin? Here in the hollow it seems to be perfectly stagnant."

The old man looked up at the sky, and then out over the river through the gap in the greenery which formed a frame for the shining sluggish water.

"There'll be no sea on to-day, missie," he answered deliberately.

"You're coming with us?" said Eugenia.

"Ah'm certainly comin' wi' you, missie," he answered decidedly.

The servants had had their tea by this time, and were preparing to take back the coach.

We mounted our horses.

"I suppose you can calculate the state of the tide pretty accurately," Brinkhampton remarked as he settled Eugenia in her saddle. I might have been mistaken, but I thought I detected a shade of anxiety in his voice.

"No, that is the difficulty," Eugenia replied. "The weather affects it. Sometimes it is a rushing race-horse, white-crested and impetuous, and sometimes it is a crawling snake, equally swift, you know, but insidious. You are caught before you suspect there is danger."

"I suppose you love the sea," he rejoined, in a tone which affected to be as casual as her own.

"Yes," she answered, "and I also loathe it. I look upon it as a treacherous enemy to be outwitted, and dote upon its changeful beauty all the same."

We were off now, down the winding lane. The green bank was behind us, grey sand-dunes were on either side, ahead was the desolate wide waste of shore, and far out, under a low and leaden sky, little bright sapphire wavelets, scarcely flecked with foam, crisped and broke with baby impotence upon the sand. The scene was solemn in its dreariness, but not depressing. Some suggestions of boundless space are more elevating than the mountains. Away to our right the flat shore shot up suddenly into precipitous cliffs, and these, curving out with a fine sweep seawards, resulted abruptly in the towering promontory which it was our object to ride round. But between us and it there were miles of desolation.

Our horses were now being tried by the ruts of the heavy cart track which formed the only road across the sand-dunes.

"This is slow going," said Eugenia, "but I warn you they will pull like mad the moment we are on firm sand; so sit tight."

The warning was not unnecessary. A few more struggles, then suddenly their feet were free of the heaviness,

and, feeling the resistance of the firm sand, they plunged about excitedly, and then set off in a frantic gallop—pitapat, pitapat, pitapat, the hoofs beat rhythmically. We were well away now, with the sea on our left, the land on our right, and on in front, looming gigantic through the haze, Towindard Head—

“Onward and northward fierce and fleet,
As if life and death were in it!
’Tis a glorious race, a race against time,
A thousand to one we win it.”

The sea-sweet air was wildly exhilarating. Even the horses seemed seized upon by the gladness there is in rapid motion and in windswept spaces. Every face was eager now. I felt I should shout aloud upon the slightest provocation—

“This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wild ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows.”

Our gallop was checked by a sudden wild commotion. I was aware of old Baldwin shouting something, of Saxon spurring on ahead of me, of Brinkhampton’s horse floundering, of a scared look on his face, of Eugenia catching his reins, giving her own horse its head, and swinging her heavy whip with sounding slashes. The horses responded gallantly, plunging and straining. I don’t know if we all shouted encouragement, but it seemed only an instant till the incident was over, and we were off again, tearing along

in a body, having swerved inland considerably. When the pace relaxed, Brinkhampton wiped his forehead. "What was it?" he asked.

"The outer edge of the quicksand," Eugenia answered. "It shifts. The last time it was here where we are now, and I thought we were giving it a wide berth to-day. Forgive me for touching your reins. There was such a racket, I despaired of making you hear, and you were pulling right into it. Look at the horses, poor brutes, how terrified they are? It would be humane to pull them up for a breathing space—" she looked on ahead, then added significantly, "*if there were time.*"

So far we had been keeping a middle course between the sea and shore, but now we began to bear down towards the water. The horses glanced suspiciously this way and that, ready to shy or swerve on the least occasion. They kept their ears pricked too, or laid them back in a nervous way, and were foaming at their mouths; and every now and then they broke out of the steady canter at which we were endeavouring to keep them in order to save them for a big spurt, if necessary, towards the end of the race, into a gallop which would soon have become a wild stampede had we not held them well in hand. But in the midst of these efforts, whilst I was altogether intent upon them, and without the slightest warning, my horse made an awkward stumble, which sent me gracefully circling from my saddle to a safer seat on the sand. Old Baldwin, seeing what was coming, had roared: "Look out!" but not in time to save me.

Brinkhampton, being on in front, did not see what had happened, and his shattered nerves, shaken already

by horror of the quicksand, betrayed him. The moment he heard the shout, without waiting to see what was wrong, he let his horse go, and galloped on some distance, leaving us to our fate.

"'is ludship 'e doan't like yer wickstands an' yer ghosteses," old Baldwin chuckled, as he picked me up.

But Brinkhampton had discovered his mistake by this time, and was cantering back to us with a deprecating look on his face like that of a diffident schoolboy who finds he has done the wrong thing and is covered with confusion. The expression suited him, and, being a splendid horseman, he looked so handsome as he approached Eugenia, that I thought with a qualm: "She will pity him."

"My horse is very nervous," he said, apologetically.

She glanced down at the horse's feet, and then looked straight before her without a word, her air of calm indifference being exactly the same as she had worn when Brinkhampton and I joined her after he had been stuck on the cliff, and found her watching the stones she was throwing make ducks and drakes on the water. On this occasion her demeanour so disconcerted Brinkhampton that he lost his head, and contradicted himself as soon as he had spoken.

"I thought it was a signal to double," he said to me.

"No; it was not a signal," I answered, "but a stone which my horse apparently mistook for a bit of seaweed."

We had moved on again, and were close to the water's edge by this time. The monstrous sea, oily and waveless, crawled up in great irregular curves over the shining sand. The horses kept their eyes fixed on the incoming

stream in frightened anticipation, and leaned away from it, as if ready to swerve if the horrid thing should touch them. Now and then, so insidious and imperceptible was its oncoming, we found ourselves surrounded, and our startled steeds strained away for the shore, prancing and splashing till they churned the flint-coloured shallows white with foam. A few more minutes would bring us abreast of the great overhanging cliffs, and the space between the sea and shore was narrowing always, so that presently we should be forced up under them. A certain gravity had settled upon us, there was a look of expectation on our faces, and we pulled up abreast of each other involuntarily, Baldwin and all.

"I confess I always feel awed," I said, with an uneasy little cough, but Eugenia did not appear to hear me. She was sitting straight, with her head held high, and her eyes wide open, listening intently.

"Why awed?" Brinkhampton asked.

"The ghosts, my lud," old Baldwin ejaculated.

Brinkhampton looked about him with a superior smile, and certainly anything more unlike a suitable setting as a preparation for ghosts than this slumberous autumn afternoon, with its stagnant tranquillity of sky and sea and shore, could not have been arranged; but the inappropriate is often as astounding as the unexpected.

And now suddenly in the distance, coming apparently from under the cliffs, there arose a dull, muffled, thudding sound. The horses noticed it as soon as we did, and pricked their ears enquiringly. They had been going at an easy canter, but in order to gratify their curiosity they relaxed their pace, and instantly the sound ceased. The

sudden silence startled them as a noise might have done, and with one accord they bounded forward, Brinkhampton being nearly unseated by the unexpected move, and instantly the thudding recommenced, drew nearer, and swelled into the unmistakable throb of galloping hoofs on sand. It was as if a troop of cavalry had charged us in the rear and was just upon us to ride us down. The horses broke into a frantic gallop, and Brinkhampton rising to it, turned his head and looked back with straining eyes, first over one shoulder and then over the other; but there was nothing to be seen even when the sound was just upon us, deafening us. It came with a rush, touching us as it were, and that instant it was over. The horses stared right and left, at the same time slackening their pace, and we realised a strange blank as of an empty space in that region of consciousness upon which the thundering hoofs had sounded.

Brinkhampton was the first to speak, after gazing up at the tall cliffs critically: "I suppose it is an echo," he said, looking hard at us each in turn as if he expected us to deny it. "And the legend was probably invented to account for the echo," he added.

"But the echo does not account for the failure of heirs male in my family," Eugenia objected drily.

From this point on, however, there was no time for talk.

"If we're to get round Towindard 'ead we mun ride, missie," old Baldwin decided.

"And if we don't get round?" Brinkhampton asked.

"We must climb the cliff or take our chance with the horses," Eugenia answered quietly. "Baldwin, we lead," she said, and the old man rode on with her on the off-

side, beaming. Eugenia on the alert, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, her excitement well-contained beneath a steady calm exterior, was lovely to behold in her youth and strength as she passed on in front, and set the pace. It was racing speed now, going against the tide full-tilt. We could measure the rate at which we were going by the lumbering look of the sea-bird's flight above us—

“’Tis a glorious race, a race against time,
A thousand to one we win it!”

The keen salt air through which we were rushing, meeting us full in the face, had freshened us at first, but now all at once I became aware of a change in it, and quite suddenly, as it seemed to me, the sea-voice sounded muffled. The change in the air was from dry to damp. The gauze veil on my hat was dripping. I looked up to see how far we were from the headland. The headland had disappeared—no, though, that must be it up in the air yonder, up above us in the clouds—no, again. I could see now. I understood. As the tide flowed in, moisture rose to the surface of the sand, making the whole wide expanse into a mirror, and it had seemed at the first glance as if the sky had come down to look at its own reflection in this; but what had deceived me was a light white curtain of mist, drawn up by the heat till it was caught in a cold current of air which condensed it into a fog that was rapidly gathering density and would presently envelop us. I was behind Eugenia, but could see by her attitude that she also was peering into the distance intently, and she raised her heavy whip and held it suspended over her horse's flank.

Baldwin was standing up in his stirrups and keeping his sharp old eyes about him. "Stick to the sea, missie," he commanded in his hoarse voice, "stick to the sea for your life."

We met the mist and plunged into it. There was no fancy work about the horses' paces now. They had buckled-to in sober earnest, with ears laid back and heads stretched out, and anxious eyes that no longer glanced askance at the treacherous water but strained on into the mist as intelligently as our own. It was the snake-sea to-day, swift but deceptive. The fog had gained on the headland by this time; the nearer we approached the less we saw of it.

"For your life, missie, for your life," old Baldwin kept muttering mechanically, and the hoarse growl mingled with the mighty murmur of ocean appropriately: "For your life, missie, for your life."

We were well-mounted, but it had been a long spin and some of it was heavy going, and now the horses began to flag perceptibly. Eugenia swung her whip round her head and brought it down swish relentlessly. The horse responded with a bound, and the others, animated by the effort, followed his example.

"Surely that is the head?" Eugenia cried. We looked up simultaneously. Something certainly loomed black above us.

"Stick to the sea, missie, stick to the sea-side for your life," old Baldwin roared. There were ridges of rock all about here under the cliffs that would have cost us many precious minutes had we come upon them.

Eugenia went boldly on, but we were late. Splash—

helter-skelter—the horses were scattering the shallow water now and inclined to baulk; but down came that relentless whip again, right and left, we following the example, and once more the mettlesome brutes responded gallantly. And now there was less helter-skelter and less splash. The leaders were up to their knees. Were we silent? Were we shouting? That last wave washed up to our girths. That last wave was a seventh wave. Count six more slowly. Supposing they are taken off their feet by the next, could they swim with us? Brinkhampton's horse staggered on the slippery bottom which was stony here, mine slipped too—ugh! what a sickening sensation! now he went down, and the water came up cold about me. Ugh, again—splutter! what a ducking!

Silence had settled upon us—the panting silence of suspense. It was touch and go whether the horses would be washed away or not. All at once, however, I noticed a change in the tenseness of Eugenia's attitude. Surely she is bearing away to the right—she is out of the water—we are following—we are splashing through shallows again—are ceasing to splash. The horses find firm footing and start away of their own accord for a final spurt of relief. We are out of the fog, and there is the coach waiting for us. Eugenia pulled up, threw her reins on her horse's neck, dismounted, and stood, smiling and satisfied, but wet through.

“We shall catch our death of cold if we have far to go in these clothes,” Brinkhampton exclaimed, impatient of this discomfort.

“Pooh! salt water will do you no harm,” Eugenia rejoined.

"That was a near un, missie," old Baldwin observed. "Ah thowt it were all oop wi' us twicest."

"It was one of our best, I think," Eugenia answered, "and I was agreeably surprised, for I was afraid it was going to be tame." She was all animation, and when we had taken our seats on the coach in the same order as before, she addressed Brinkhampton in the bantering tone they used to each other as a rule: "Now tell me," she said, "after this, do you still pretend to offer me in exchange the vitiated air of your great wicked city, and the modest pleasure of a ride in the Row, or of being driven on a coach by way of squalid Hammersmith and pretentious Chiswick to eat without appetite at a tawdry hotel in Richmond?"

VIII.

THE next morning, early, I was writing in my room upstairs with the windows wide open, when I suddenly became aware of an altercation between Eugenia and Brinkhampton on the lawn below.

They went off together, however, with every evidence of cordial agreement between them; so much so, indeed, that I sat on the window-sill long after they had crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees, once more weighing the probabilities, and wondering if she would accept him.

When they returned together to lunch, I could see that something had happened, but as they were both flushed and both looked discomfited, I fancied there had only been a rather more serious dispute than usual.

Directly lunch was over, however, Brinkhampton announced that he was going to order his man to pack.

"Are you off then?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm off," he answered doggedly.

"Now why should you go?" Eugenia exclaimed.

"I can only stay here on one condition," he said with severity.

"Well, that is the only condition on which I can't ask you to stay," she answered instantly. "But I do think you are stupid to give up your shooting on that account."

"You don't appreciate my feelings," he said with a hurt air.

"I hope I do," she answered. She rose from the table as she spoke, brushed a crumb from the front of her dress, and quietly left the room.

Then Brinkhampton looked hard and inquiringly at me. "I can't think you have prejudiced her against me," he said.

"I should hope not," was my dry response.

"But have you said anything about me to her?"

"As much as I have said about her to you?"

"Next to nothing, that is—then how does she know?"

"If she does know anything about you, she must have arrived at it by some process of induction," I answered, not able to imagine what she could know.

"Well, I think you might have warned me," he exclaimed, and then began to pace the room with agitated steps.

"I am afraid I have been to blame," I retorted ironically. "It would doubtless have pleased you better if I had told you all I know about her opinions and character,

while carefully concealing from her all that I know about yours."

"A girl has no business to have opinions of any kind, she should adopt her husband's when she marries," Brinkhampton ejaculated. "Nothing but mischief comes of women thinking for themselves. She would have accepted me but for her opinions." He reflected a little upon this, frowning portentously, and then broke out again: "I've been regularly taken in! I gave her the credit of being a nice little English country girl, quite uninformed, and here I find her old in ideas already; and, worst of all, advanced. She didn't tell me coarsely in so many words to my face that I'm not good enough for her, but, by Jove! that is what she meant. She says she always thinks of me as a sort of man out of a novel by Ouida. What on earth have you all been doing to let her read such books?"

"It was an old uncle of hers, an ex-guardsman of your own corps, by the way," I rejoined, "who first introduced her to that kind of literature. He used to give Eugenia Ouida's books as they came out, with the emphatic comment, 'She shows 'em up! she shows 'em up!' and Eugenia, after careful study of them, has drawn her own conclusions."

He pondered upon this also for a little, and then resumed: "By Jove! I was astounded! What do you think she said to me, right out plump? 'I have no taste for nursing,' she said, 'and you are so delicate.' 'Delicate!' I exclaimed in astonishment. 'Well, you require to begin your day on wine, you know,' she said. 'I don't require it, I take it because I like it,' I said. 'Oh, then

you are self-indulgent,' she rejoined, as quick as thought, 'and if you are so much so now, the weakness will grow upon you to a quite dangerous extent by-and-by, and gout and bad temper will be the order of the day.' She said it lightly, but, by Jove! she meant it."

"Then she has rejected you?"

"Emphatically! Yet she doesn't see why I shouldn't stay and finish the shooting!"

"And why not if it amuses her to have you here?"

He looked at me in tragic disgust. "Would you have me stay here simply for her amusement?" he thundered.

"Certainly," I said. "It is merely a turning of the tables. You came here simply for your own benefit, and in return the least you can do is to stay if it pleases her to ask you."

"You have a nice consideration, both of you, for my feelings!" he exclaimed.

"Your what, Brinkhampton?" I asked, laughing.

He stood before me a moment, trying to annihilate me with a look, and then stalked straight out of the room.

IX.

"So you have rejected him," I said when next I saw Eugenia.

She was taken aback at first.

"So he has told you," she ejaculated. "Well, I wonder if he thought I should be mean enough to betray him! I asked him to stay on simply because I didn't want you to suspect that I had had to humiliate him by refusing him. It is hateful to hurt people's feelings.

Besides, as a guest, I like him, and, further, it is good for that kind of man to be with ladies."

"Then you are by way of elevating his tastes if possible?"

"Oh, by all means. My principle is to do anything honourable for that kind of man but marry him."

I was silent, and she reflected for a little, then broke out again: "He said I did not appreciate his feelings, but indeed I think I do—debts, difficulties, debilitated nerves, and everything else that went to make up his motive for marrying me. Why, when I engage a servant, he has to have a character."

"Nevertheless, I think he cares for you in his own way. He told me he had found his ideal in you."

"Very likely," she answered. "But before one can feel flattered by such an assertion, it is necessary to know what his ideal is—a nice quiet little thing, I fancy, with lots of money, and no inconvenient intellectual capacity."

I could not help smiling, she had gauged him so exactly.

"But he is not my ideal at all," she pursued. "I want Sir Galahad, and Society provides me with Gawain, or Lancelot at the best, when all my longing is for 'the blameless king.'"

"I wonder where you will find your ideal."

"In Saxon Wake," she answered instantly. "Bit by bit his family have been developing every quality in which my own was deficient. For hundreds of years the two have been living here side by side, ours slowly deteriorating, losing by degrees much of what they possessed, his, by their virtues, as gradually acquiring what we lost.

Compare Saxon's father with Uncle Paul, for instance! and Saxon's career with Lord Brinkhampton's! not to mention their respective abilities. Give me him for a husband!"

"Whom?" said Saxon himself, coming round the corner.

"You," she blurted out, turning crimson. "Why don't you care for me, Saxon?" she went on desperately—on the in-for-a-penny-in-for-a-pound principle, I suppose. "Why won't you ask me to marry you? But I know. You will leave me lonely and miserable for all my life just because I am richer than you are." She wrung her hands as she spoke, and the young man, who had stopped short, flushed and turned pale, looking from her to me in confusion.

"I hope he has more sense," I cried, flinging the words at him as I fled.

X.

WHEN I returned to the house, there was a carriage at the door, and I found Brinkhampton ready to depart.

"I suppose there is really no chance for me?" he said, in the dubious tone of one who is still venturing to hope.

"No, none," I answered. "Eugenia has just proposed to Saxon Wake, and I left her trying to persuade him to accept her. It seems that he has some scruples on account of the difference of wealth and position."

"Good Lord!" Brinkhampton ejaculated, quite forgetting himself. "If this is your modern maiden, then give me a good old-fashioned womanly woman, who knows

nothing and cares less so long as you put her in a good position and let her have lots of money. But"—he looked hard at me—"you are joking, surely."

"No, I am not," I said.

"And you approve. I can see you do."

"Yes, I do," I answered, "under the circumstances."

The roar of the rolling spheres, astronomers say, is so tremendous as to be beyond the hearing of our mortal ears; and so the sudden upward impulse of the human race in this our day, as shown in the attitude of women, is beyond the earthbound comprehension of most men. Brinkhampton could conceive of nothing more eligible for a husband than a man of good manners with a fine position. He stood for some seconds looking down at his boots after I had spoken as if considering, but nothing came of it except another withering glance, the last token with which he favoured me—poor fellow, as Eugenia said.

We were standing beside a table in the hall on which his covert coat lay, and now he picked it up, put on his hat, took one last look round as if bidding farewell to the comfortable possessions he had been so confident of making his own, then walked straight out, got into the carriage without another word, and was driven away.

And now I hear he says the most unpleasant things about myself and Mrs. Saxon Wake, but happily Eugenia's maternal duties are too all-engrossing to allow her to trouble herself about idle gossip from that section of society which, as her Uncle Paul maintains, "Ouida shows up."

Knowing the curious fatality which had befallen the sons of her family ever since that legendary curse was pro-

nounced upon them, I had a horrid qualm one day as I sat watching her playing with her baby-boy.

"He looks strong enough," slipped from me inadvertently.

Eugenia smiled.

"You are thinking about the curse," she said. "I have thought a great deal about it myself since this young gentleman arrived, and I believe I see the mistake we women have all made in the choice of our husbands. It is a universal mistake. We admired mere animal courage in a man which is only one form of courage, instead of requiring moral courage, which includes every other kind—until I came. But I chose my husband for his moral qualities."

"Then perhaps you have——"

"I am sure I have," she concluded. "I have removed the curse unawares."

THE YELLOW LEAF.

PART I.

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

I.

"THERE will be no one to see you off to-day, as I cannot go myself," my mother said; "but I suppose if I send you to the station in the carriage you will be able to manage; and, now that you are out, the sooner you learn to look after yourself the better."

"All right," I replied confidently, under the impression that I had very little to learn. And so it happened that, on this particular occasion in my early girlhood, I found myself, with the most delightful sense of importance, travelling from London seawards, alone. The sensation was more than agreeable—it was ecstatic. On the way to the station I felt as if I had never been in a carriage before. I was looking at life from a new point of view, and the people in the streets seemed to see me as I saw myself—at least I fancied that their eyes expressed a different feeling for me from any that had ever shone on me before; but I did not try to translate it. Being pleased and happy myself, it seemed only natural that a

pleased and happy expression should come into every face that was turned towards me.

Having arrived at the station, found my train, and secured a seat, I began to loiter up and down the long platform, ostensibly watching the people, but really, with the happy conceit of youth, absorbed in myself, as it appears to me now; yet it was not altogether conceit, but rather the blissful absence of that sense of comparison which comes later on with chastening effect to show us our own unimportance. The sudden sense of freedom had revealed me to myself all out of focus, as it were, and magnified, as objects appear at first to one who has just recovered his sight; and I believe if I had done a portrait of myself at that moment I should have made myself seven feet high.

But pride goeth before a fall, and I was brought up out of this happy state with a jerk which effectually upset the dignity of my demeanour. I had perceived that the train was in motion, and it flashed through my mind that it was being inconsiderate enough to depart without me. As it was the last one in the day that would suit my purpose, I made a desperate dash for a carriage door, and scrambled in, regardless of the howling officials on the platform who would have hindered me. In doing so I became aware of exactly the same performance taking place at the farther end of the compartment; it was as if I had caught a flying glimpse of myself in a mirror as I jumped on to the footboard, opened the door, and swung myself in, after the deliberate manner peculiar to guards on the Underground. But, as often happens, although I had seen the thing done, the fact did not rise from my

sub-consciousness to the surface of my thoughts, in order to present itself for my consideration, for some time after I had taken my seat.

The train slid out of the dingy station, and now everything was of interest. I even strained my eyes to read the advertisements paraded on blank brick walls, corners of squalid houses, parapets and arches of railway bridges, any- and everywhere, till my brain reeled.

But then came a glimpse of the river. The unpolluted summer air streamed in upon me. The summer sunshine, unthinned by smoke, lit up the landscape, sparkled on the water, brightened the blue of the sky, whitened the clouds, reddened the roofs, intensified the green, and flooded my whole soul with another kind of joy in life, very different from that which I had just been experiencing. There had been excitement in the crowd, but here alone there was supreme content.

It was a torrid day; but Fate had befriended me, for it was a cushionless third-class compartment I had stormed, all open and airy, and also empty, as I at first supposed; but in this I was mistaken. There had been nobody visible to begin with, but, on looking across after a while, I was surprised to see a pair of bright dark eyes just appearing above the backs of the seats, at the farther end of the compartment. These eyes were fixed upon me in a confident way; and involuntarily I felt, the moment they met mine, that a flash of intelligence had passed between us. The immediate consequence was, that the owner of the eyes, a lanky, dark girl, got up, fixed a struggling bull pup under her arm, where she held it firmly in spite of its kicks and yelps and snaps, clambered clumsily

over the backs of the seats from her end of the compartment to mine, regardless of any display she might make of lean legs by the way, and sat down opposite to me.

"Two's company," she remarked oracularly.

"Quite so; but you were two to begin with," I answered.

"Counting the bull pup," she said, drawing the creature from under her arm as she spoke. "Isn't he a beauty?" She held him up by the forelegs, and shook him playfully, addressing him the while in tender tones: "Look at um's chin, and um's legs how um bows; and look at um's werry magnificent nose!"

But the puppy, evidently not appreciating these compliments, began again to kick and growl and snap impatiently, exercises which drew from his delighted mistress assurances that "he *was* a game un, den!" as she settled him comfortably upon her lap. He was already a formidable-looking creature, a brindle of exceptional beauty, judged, of course, by his own standard of excellence.

"I bought him," the young lady proceeded, "to draw Aunt Marsh. I want to make her believe that the outcome of Woman's Rights is bull pups. But now I'm beginning to love him—a beauty, den!—for his own sake. What a nuisance it is metaphors will mix! I was just going to remark that Aunt Marsh is the kind of bull you must take by the horns if you would get on with her; and that's what I mean, only it isn't quite right, somehow. Now, my mother is sixty thousand times cleverer than Aunt Marsh, yet she gives in to her—they're sisters-in-law, you know—but I'm a generation in advance of my mother, thank goodness!"

"I ought to tell you," I observed, "that I believe I know your Aunt: Lady Marsh, is she not?"

She looked at me with a pitying smile. "Yes, that's the person," she answered. "But, now, do you suppose that I'm quite such an idiot as to express myself so freely to a stranger of whom I know nothing?"

"Well, then, you have the advantage of me, for I am quite sure I have never seen you before, nor have I ever heard of anything like you."

"Anything like me! Now, that's delicious. But you mean who am I? I can't abide that roundabout way of asking who a body is. But I'll tell you who I am, just because you're not egotistical."

"How have you discovered that I'm not egotistical?" I asked.

"Because you thought first of me rather than of what concerned yourself. Most people would have wanted to find out what I knew about them, and until I told them they wouldn't have taken any interest in me."

"But you haven't told me——"

"Oh, I'm Adalesa Shutt," she interrupted offhand. "Adalesa Shutt-up is the form it generally takes with the impolite. I may mention that my parents are responsible for the name. They still survive."

There was a pause after this, during which she hugged her brindle bull dog absently, with her dark eyes fixed on a far-away point of the horizon.

While under the influence of her bright, sharp, slangy manner as she talked, I had supposed her to be about fifteen. She wore her dress short, and her hair hanging down her back in a thick plait, as girls of that age gener-

ally do; but now, as she sat silently contemplative, she looked older.

"But why should you 'draw' your aunt, as you call it?" burst from me involuntarily, as I watched her.

She turned upon me with her infectious smile. "It is the only possible attitude for me in her abode," she said—"a don't-care-came-to-be-hanged kind of attitude. I daren't be docile or affectionate, because I have to keep her at a distance, otherwise she would give me good advice. She *did* make me suffer the first time I stayed with her!"

"But——"

"Oh, yes, I know all that," she put in impatiently. "She's the kindest woman in the world, you were going to say. Everybody says so. But just you observe! I would rather have a termagant to fight. One wouldn't be afraid of hurting her. But these soft, sweet women bruise so easily, they make you suffer all round. There are your nerves and your better nature both on the alert, while your good sense is being outraged, and your worst self is fighting to be up in opposition. Heaven help me from having to encounter a feather-bed woman!"

"But how did she make you suffer?"

"Oh—I'll show you when we arrive."

"How do you know I am going there?" I asked in surprise.

Again she looked at me and laughed, but only repeated: "I'll show you when we get there. Mind you, I don't suffer now."

The train pulled up at a little country station as she spoke, and we both alighted. An open carriage was waiting outside for us.

"Ah, there is my friend Barkins," Adalesa exclaimed, meaning the coachman. "*I'm* going to drive, Barkins—Barkins bein' willin'," she added aside to me.

"You and John must go inside," she further insisted, "because Mademoiselle here only sits on the box. She always travels third class, and sits on the box. Those are her ladyship's orders. I have them here in my pocket"—and she slapped that receptacle.

The coachman hesitated, and looked at me as if for confirmation, but I preserved my gravity. The misstatement Adalesa had made with regard to my usual mode of travelling led me to infer that the rest of the story was rather more facetious than accurate; but I would not have betrayed her for the world. I wanted to see what next.

The coachman slowly descended from his box, keeping a wary eye on Adalesa all the time, as if he were seeking a sign for his guidance, or suspected firearms. As he descended on the one side, however, she scrambled up on the other, and when she had seated herself he handed her the reins. I had followed her on to the box, so that there was nothing now but for him and the footman to get into the carriage.

"You'd better put the luggage in too," Adalesa suggested; and it was with a look of relief that the men complied. "Otherwise," she whispered to me, "any one meeting the carriage, and seeing you and me on the box, driving the servants, might have mistaken us for a travelling lunatic asylum."

"Not such a very great mistake, perhaps, after all," I ventured.

"Oh, my dear, speak for yourself," she promptly rejoined; "as for me, there's a method, you know."

She put the bull pup between her feet as she spoke, and tightened the reins; and then we were off—not at a wild gallop, as I quite expected, but at that rapid, exhilarating trot at which only a good whip can keep a good pair of horses. I understood the coachman's easy acquiescence better now. It was evident that the girl was accustomed to drive. She had that negligent look and attitude, and apparently careless way of holding the reins, which betoken mastery of the art. The road itself she scarcely seemed to see. Her eyes wandered away from it on all sides, and at that moment one would have said they were dreamy eyes, seeking sharp contrasts of sunshine and shadow less than mystical effects of dimness and distance.

The drive left impressions in my mind of a dusty road with heavy frondage of ferns by the wayside, all drooping, as though wearied and reposing from the ardent summer heat. Then there came a fertile land well wooded; the sheen of a copper beech; low hills lifting a belt of sombre pines up to the azure of the sky; the grey-white wool of sheep against the green of grass; the reflection of indolent cattle standing ankle-deep in a pool; the heavy foliage on overhanging boughs; bracken on the banks, and wild flowers everywhere. Adalesa pointed out two objects of interest with her whip: "Those chimneys there in the wood—you can see the smoke above the trees—that is the house. And there, beyond, don't you see? that shining line, that is the sea—the sea!" She drew in her breath as if the very word were a joy to her. But presently she burst out again in her usual way:

"I should think you feel like a figure in a farce," she said, on seeing me glance behind at the servants sitting solemnly with folded arms and their backs to the horses, opposite our trunks, which arrogantly occupied the other seat.

Then we entered the Chase, and began to catch glimpses of a great house among the trees. Some places have an aspect of self-denial impressed upon every feature; as you approach they seem to insist that you shall observe the economies they have had to practise; but here it was just the opposite. There was a self-indulgent, spick-and-span, affluent air about everything.

"Oh!" Adalesa exclaimed, "I begin to feel feather bedding about, don't you? Nasty unwholesome stuffy thing, feather bedding. Aunt Marsh is by way of softening me, rubbing off the rough edges, don't you know. Just you watch!"

II.

LADY MARSH must have heard the crunch of carriage wheels as we drew up at the door, for she came hurrying down to meet us; but the men-servants had hopped out alertly, and we ourselves had descended from the box before she appeared, so that I doubt if she ever knew how we had come.

"Do come in, dears!" she exclaimed. "Come to the drawing-room and have some tea. Evangeline is out. She will be so sorry. She had to go for a ride, but of course she expected to be back in time, only one can't always calculate. Dear children! I am so glad to see

you. Why, you seem to have grown, Adalesa. You are certainly taller and—and slimmer.”

“Longer and lankier,” Adalesa translated cheerfully.

“But isn’t your dress just a little short, dearest, for your age?” Lady Marsh ventured in the gentlest way, when we were seated. She was known as “a *sweet* woman,” “one of those whom it is restful to recall”; and I was not at all pleased to find that that seed of corruption, the trick of absurdly associating her with feather beds, had taken root in my mind; but it had, and there it remains.

“Long dresses!” Adalesa ejaculated: “no, thank you! I know what is expected of long dresses.”

“Dignity, is it not, dear?” her aunt ventured, with a deprecating smile.

“Yes,” Adalesa groaned; “and dignity, they say, is a mysterious carriage of the body to cover defects of the mind.”

Lady Marsh sat down at the tea-table, and began to pour out tea. “But, you see, dear, men say such things,” she replied, in her gentle way.

“Ah—men!” Adalesa drawled. “You see, I haven’t made up my mind to like men yet—a man, perhaps, eventually—but *men*! too conceited, you know.”

“Dear child! what do *you* know about men?”

“Absolutely nothing,” was the candid rejoinder; “and that’s why I wear short dresses. I want to study man, and he only shows himself to short frocks. He’s off guard with them. But I’ll find him out! My angles fit me for the task. Thank heaven for my angles! No man who looks at me will think of me as a young lady, that most awful of human weaknesses.”

"I don't like to hear you speak in that flippant way, dear," her aunt deprecated. "The man is the head of the woman, you know."

"Yes, sometimes," said Adalesa, judicially; "and sometimes he isn't, because the woman is a long way ahead of him. But the rule is much of a muchness, I believe."

"Well, then, it would be a case of two heads are better than one in a household," her aunt answered, good-humouredly.

"Or too many cooks spoil the broth—you never know," came the ready response. "But where's my pup?" she broke off; then rushed from the room, exclaiming that she'd forgotten him.

"That child's cleverness is quite phenomenal," Lady Marsh remarked when she had disappeared. "But, oh dear, it is all so terrible—so very wrong-headed, you know! And"—stooping over to speak in an undertone, as if the matter were not quite delicate—"I am afraid it is all my poor sister's fault. She is so sadly what they call 'advanced'—woman's rights, the suffrage, short hair, and all that, you know."

Lady Marsh spoke in a confidential tone, very flattering to a young girl from a woman of her age and station, and also flattering in that it was natural to infer from it that she thought I had been brought up in a superior manner.

Adalesa returned with the bull pup under her arm. "Isn't he *sweet*?" she demanded, putting him down, and making him run towards her aunt.

"No!" Lady Marsh exclaimed, drawing her skirts

together lest he should touch her—"anything but sweet. Oh!—do take him away! How could you bring such a dreadful creature here?"

"Dreadful creature!" Adalesa repeated in an injured tone; then picking up her grotesque pet she hugged him like a mother whose babe has just been insulted. "And I *thought*— Well, if it is *womanly* to be so hard-hearted, I'd rather *not* be womanly." She tossed her head haughtily when she had spoken, and managed to look both hurt and offended.

"My dear child," Lady Marsh cried in consternation, "what have I done? You don't expect me to like that dreadful creature? I should be ashamed to have it seen about the house. Who ever heard of a gentlewoman petting such a——"

Adalesa uttered a little scream. "Don't—don't say nasty things about him. I shall hate—*any one*—who doesn't appreciate him." She drew herself up, glanced at me, and walked with dignity out of the room.

"Well!" Lady Marsh exclaimed for the second time. "Now, you see, my dear, what comes of this nonsense—taking women out of their proper sphere and all that!"

"Do you mean," I began, "that you think a fondness for bull pups——" But here I checked myself, for I perceived that I was inadvertently playing into the hands of the wicked Adalesa.

On my way upstairs to dress for dinner, I discovered that young person's dark head inserted in a doorway, round which she was peering. "Come in and kiss my pup," she said, persuasively, looking at me with languishing eyes.

"Tell me," I said, ignoring this last impertinence, "Tell me how much of your late misconduct was by way of 'drawing' your aunt, and how much was——"

"Innate cussedness?" she suggested.

"Innate cussedness," I gravely repeated.

"Oh—you pays your money, *et cætera*," she answered easily. "But I'm dressed and you're not," she proceeded; "and you're late. Let me go to your room and help you."

I led the way, smiling a little to myself as I pictured the sort of help I thought I might expect from her; but I soon found I was utterly mistaken in my surmise. I had imagined her awkward and inefficient, but found her deftness itself, and, what is more, she was kind. It was loving service that she did me when she laughed at some inartistic arrangement of ornaments I had devised for my hair, threw the artificial things aside, and cleverly replaced them with fresh and fragrant flowers. She certainly did her best to make the most of me, but all the time how she talked!

"When I first saw you to-day I thought you were older than I am," she said, "but it seems you are younger. You say such wise things, though, and look so grave, it's easy to be mistaken. But now I see you are only a babe with a big head, and you want a lot of attention. You'll have to go through a period of feather-bedasia, and you'll suffer; but don't be disheartened. Just do as I do. Be vulgar, buy a bull pup, and chatter."

"I don't in the least see what I'm to suffer from," I protested. "Your aunt is charming."

"Yes," she rejoined with a groan; "didn't I *warn* you that she was?"

"And as for your cousin Evangeline——"

"Now, stop," she interrupted. "I won't let you commit yourself to *that* stupid fallacy. Evangeline isn't charming. I am the reaction from feather-bedasia; she is the consequence of it; and she's a pig."

"I don't agree with you at all," I answered decidedly; "and I should think I know as much about her as you do, for we were at school together; and she was most popular with all the girls."

"Oh, yes," Adalesa answered, imitating her aunt. "She has such pretty manners, as Aunt Marsh says, 'so gentle, so refined, so unaffected'—a whole string of adjectives, a set formula that has been flung at me—no, I should say, *gently insisted upon* for my benefit so often that I am not likely to forget it. And then she always promised to be a beauty, I suppose, which must have added greatly to her *prestige* with girls at school. But all the same, she's a pig. Why wasn't she here to receive us to-day?"

"Her mother said she had had to ride——"

"Her mother ought to know better than to excuse her. It was a fine day, and Evangeline thought it would be more amusing to go for a ride than to come in the carriage to meet us; so she went, and she has not yet returned; and that is Evangeline all over. Oh, I know her! And so would you if you'd ever been here before. Have you, by the way?"

"I thought you knew all about me! You seemed to say so in the train to-day."

"I knew your name and address, for I read them on the luggage you were looking after when you came into

the station," she answered, with charming candour. "I saw you peacocking about as if you were somebody, and, as your belongings were deposited under my eyes, I had the curiosity to look and see. If I hadn't known that you were coming here you wouldn't have had the honour of making my acquaintance so early in the day, for, although free with my friends, I am not in the habit of picking up any goodness-knows-who for a travelling companion."

"Aren't you?" I said in surprise. "I should have thought——"

"You would have thought!" she exclaimed. "You innocent babe! You haven't learnt to think yet. But you are very entertaining. I nearly missed my train watching you. You were so smily and pleased with yourself and everybody else, anybody could see it was the first time you'd ever been on your own hook. My, what a blush! It's running all down your back. Well, forgive me! I didn't mean to wound your pride. But you're too sensitive, my dear—as sensitive as you're simple, and as transparent. Those who run might read your every emotion; and that would be rapid reading too, for you suffer from a singular variety of emotions in a short time."

"You seem to be a singularly acute young person," I observed, bridling.

"Well, yes," she rejoined, with unvarying cheerfulness, "I *am* sharp, very." She stood off as she spoke to see the effect of a big bow she had pinned on my dress; adding, as she looked, with her head on one side, "So you have never been here before?"

"No," I answered. "Your aunt was a friend of my

mother's, long ago, before either of them was married ; but they hadn't met for years until last season, when Evangeline and I left school, and came out ; and then they renewed their acquaintance. They agreed that Evangeline and I mustn't consider our education finished simply because we had left school ; and as Evangeline is an only child, Lady Marsh entreated my mother to let me come here for awhile to work with her. My mother is great on the question of education. She says she has suffered all her life long from having had hers curtailed, and she is determined therefore that her daughters shall have every advantage that her sons have. If we are not clever enough to profit there will be no harm done ; and if we are, she expects us to be thankful that we were allowed to experiment and see what we could do, instead of being kept ignorant in deference to a mere theory that we have no mental capacity. But of course we are not coerced. Since I left school I have been allowed to follow my own inclinations, and I have chosen to be taught the same things that my brothers are studying."

"Gracious, how clever the child talks !" Adalesa exclaimed in her irrepressible way. "It's just like a book. Perhaps you learnt it by heart. I begin to suspect you have a mind. What a terrible thing ! But, anyway, what a blessing it is you met me ! A few years more, and you would have been unendurable." She stood off again, with her arms akimbo, and contemplated me from this new point of view, derisively at first, but by degrees her face softened. "And so you have come here to work with Evangeline, you innocent babe !" she said humorously. "You *must* be clever. Only a very clever person would

have done such a stupid thing—a book-clever person I mean, not a world-clever person. It isn't human to be up to everything, and your world-clever people are all out of it in literature, but your book-clever people fail in their knowledge of life. Now, do you really suppose that Evangeline will keep up anything but showy accomplishments? And even those she will only do superficially,—a little music, a little drawing, rather more French because of the naughty books, which she reads regularly, but never leaves lying about, for Evangeline is wise in her generation—though not wise enough to conquer her amateurishness, that curse of our sex—an amateur, that's what she is, a cunning amateur imperfect in everything, one of those, admired for their beauty and despised for their folly, who bring ridicule upon us all. Yet you believe in her! Yah, Simple Sincerity! Child of Light! Hot water, that's what's in store for you here—perpetual hot water. You'll always be putting your foot in it.”

“ You encourage me,” I said.

“ Don't mention it,” she answered.

III.

HAVING dressed me to her satisfaction, much as a nurse does a child without consulting it, Adalesa made me a deep reverence, offered me her arm, and conducted me downstairs in the most gentlemanly manner. She had quite taken me under her wing by this time, and was prepared to pet and patronise me; but somehow I did not resent her assumption of superiority, for her mind was more mature than mine was, and I had to yield of neces-

sity to her force of character, having no strength of my own at that time to oppose to it.

"What a lovely old house!" I exclaimed, on our way to the drawing-room.

"Yes, it is like Uncle Henry," she answered—"big, solid, comfortable, strong, warm, and good. He's early English himself, and splendid. You'll see!"

He was alone in the drawing-room when we entered, in appearance a typical English country gentleman of the best kind, standing on the hearthrug with his back to the fireplace in the typical attitude. He received us both most kindly, but with few words, contenting himself with looking from one to the other with a benign smile on his face, as if he were sorting our separate attractions, comparing and approving of us.

"That pig, Evangeline, has not been near us yet," Adalesa grumbled. "It's pretty bad manners to me, but it's downright rude to——"

The door opened as she spoke, and Evangeline herself, all in white tulle, floated towards us, exclaiming: "*So* sorry. I was afraid you would think me rude"—she clasped her hands towards me with a little entreating gesture—"but, oh, pray don't. I really *have* an excuse."

"Let's hear what it is, then," Adalesa answered bluntly.

"My horse—I rode too far," she commenced, stammering.

"That's no excuse," Adalesa interrupted.

"Dear, do excuse me," Evangeline said to me; and when I found her so sweetly apologetic I did excuse her at once, and, moreover, felt angry with Adalesa for mak-

ing such a scene, although the moment before, while under her exclusive influence, I had agreed that Evangeline was rude. Now, however, with Evangeline there to delight my eyes and soothe my senses with her gentleness and grace, I could not believe anything of her that was not altogether lovely and adorable.

"You may say what you like," Adalesa added; "but you have committed a breach of hospitality, and for the honour of the family I take upon myself to reprove you."

"Thanks," Evangeline said, smiling with unruffled sweetness.

Sir Henry sat down in an easy chair, fixed his eyes on some ferns in the grate, and looked as if he had not heard; but when Adalesa went presently and lounged on the arm of his chair, with her elbow on his shoulder, he took her hand and caressed it gently.

Lady Marsh came into the room just then, smiling amiably as usual, and dressed in an opulent manner. "Adalesa, *dear*," she said: "do move away. You will make your uncle quite hot."

Adalesa languidly complied, and Sir Henry leant back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. His silence struck me as significant. He seemed to be, either by way of acquiescing in, or of utterly ignoring the sayings and doings of the ladies of his family, a singularly indifferent or singularly neutral person; and I wondered if he always let Lady Marsh decide whether he was too hot or not, and that sort of thing.

There were a few good pictures in the dining-room, and after dinner he showed them to me, and told me anecdotes, also, about some family portraits that hung in the

hall, and some ancient armour. The house was several centuries old, with a long, unbroken family history, which was illustrated by most of its contents. The old carved cabinets, and everything else in the way of ornament, had their associations, and even the furniture, some of it, had a history attached to it, to which I listened with an honest interest that satisfied Sir Henry. Lady Marsh and Evangeline had remained at table discussing the details of a dinner-dress they had seen somewhere; but Adalesa went with us, clinging to her uncle's arm with both hands.

"I would have you observe that there are no meaningless feminine fripperies here," she cried. "This has been the cradle of a sturdy race; and it looks like it. I'm one of the race," she added, laughing up at her uncle.

"Dear child!" Lady Marsh exclaimed, coming out of the dining-room at that moment, "don't hang on your uncle so; you will tire him." Then to me, in her amiable way: "This is but a bare old place at present, but now that Evangeline is old enough to take an interest in it, we must see what can be done."

"Oh, dear!" Adalesa groaned; "if Aunt Marsh and Evangeline are to desecrate it, the good old oak and ebony will be disguised in down cushions and dimity in no time."

"Dear, is that quite respectful?" Lady Marsh exclaimed.

"No; nor would it be respectful for an alien to alter anything here," Adalesa rejoined doggedly.

"I am afraid, dear, your uncle spoils you," Lady Marsh said in her gentlest way, and then swept on to the drawing-room, arm-in-arm with Evangeline. At the door

she looked back over her shoulder, and said to Sir Henry: "Don't make that child do too much, dearest. She has had a journey, you know."

"Which child?" he asked in an undertone, looking from one to the other, as soon as the drawing-room door was shut.

"Neither," Adalesa said, scornfully.

"Then take an arm each, my dears," he rejoined, almost in a whisper, "and we'll see what there is to be seen."

From which I perceived that this benign-looking gentleman, seemingly so yielding, was in reality a bold, bad man, capable of opposition, who had put himself in my power; and I slipped my hand through his arm, and smiled up at him confidently, just as Adalesa, on the other side, was doing. He beamed down upon us both, and led us away to the library, where he lived as a rule when he was not out of doors; and there he showed us miniatures, arms, and ancient gems of his ancestors, who seemed to fill the great comfortable room as he talked about them, and to be nearer to him than the wife and daughter, with their marvellous charms of manner, whose tastes and interests were all so modern, of the Society kind, so far removed, if not so utterly opposed, to everything he cherished.

IV.

EVANGELINE had a sitting-room of her own, a sunny south room, and here we girls were to work. We settled down to it next day, and during the morning Lady Marsh

looked in, "just to see how you are getting on, dears! And what are *you* doing?" meaning me.

"Mathematics," I answered.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "You must excuse me, dear child, but is it nice for a young lady to study such a very masculine subject? A girl's manner, you know, should be so very different. The woman's sphere is to refine and elevate man."

"But do mathematics make one's manners masculine?" I asked in alarm. I was diffident in those days, as became my age, and the least shade of disapproval made me unhappy.

"Well, they have not done so as yet in your case, dear child," Lady Marsh answered, with infinite tact. "But still, you know, dear, they are not womanly pursuits. You will not be fit for the duties of wife and mother by-and-by if you injure your constitution now. I know your mother's idea, but I cannot agree with her, and I often tell her I am sure she would not now be the dear, sweet, *womanly* woman she is, if she had been taught these new-fangled notions as a girl. I cannot think it is right for young ladies to be educated like their brothers, and go to the university and all that nonsense, getting such ideas! I don't believe that a woman's mind is inferior to a man's, you know—far from it; and, in fact, in some things"—she looked round and lowered her voice—"there can be no doubt as to which is the superior sex, only it doesn't do to say so, men make such remarks. But, as to professions for women, and that sort of thing, why, fancy *me* a professional woman! Evangeline, *dearest*, put your French away, that's a good child, and get

a story book. I am sure you have done enough for to-day."

When she had spoken she patted my shoulder kindly, smiled on us all, and left the room.

"Now see what you have brought on yourself, with your mathematics!" Adalesa exclaimed, her dark eyes dancing mischievously. "Aunt Marsh knew your mother's idea, and I believe she's got you down here to cure you of it. That's the sort of kind thing she's celebrated for. She suspected mathematics this morning, and came in prepared."

Evangeline, who had risen with cheerful alacrity to put her books away, in obedience to her mother's suggestion, turned now from the bookshelf at which she was standing dipping into a novel, and looked at Adalesa indignantly. "I don't think it is nice of you," she said, "to speak like that about my mother. She must know better than either you or I. Why, just think! You will own that we were intended to be healthy and happy—that we require to be so in order to be equal to such duties as we have to perform—and how can we be so if we go and injure ourselves with work we are not fit for? It's only common-sense, if you will think. Men were clearly intended to do all the hard work, and keep us in comfort, and screen us from anything objectionable. *My* ambition is to be a *womanly* woman. I think mamma is quite right."

By this time I was feeling very uncomfortable. To be thought unwomanly seemed to me as dreadful as to be thought wicked; but yet I felt there was something wrong somewhere, for I could not see sex in a subject of

study. Why should one be masculine and another feminine? Surely there is no sex in mind? The question of what we shall be taught should be answered by finding out for us what we have the ability to learn. If a boy has a genius for cooking and a girl the faculty for medicine, he must be a sorry educator who takes pains to pervert either of them from their natural bent, with the inevitable result that the girl becomes a bad cook and the boy an indifferent doctor. Happily this time-honoured idiosyncrasy is dying out, but, like all conventions based on prejudice, it will linger long in secluded minds—where the fact that *he* as a man and *she* as a woman is indication enough for both general and special purposes of education, and will be until preceptors are made to suffer at the hands of the bad cooks, indifferent doctors, and other mistakes they have helped to produce—commonplaces, by the way, known well to all of us, but by how few applied!

Evangeline had departed, and Adalesa was watching me with a grin on her intelligent countenance. "There is no resisting a feather bed, is there?" she asked. "Aunt Marsh is on the war path, I think, this morning. She'll go and order Uncle Henry's day till she's feather-bedded all the comfort out of it. Let's go and see!"

She jumped up, seized me by the arm, and dragged me away to the library, where we found Sir Henry slowly pacing up and down, deep in thought. He looked from one to the other of us almost sadly when we entered, but smiled indulgently at Adalesa when she dropped my arm and, seizing his in her energetic way, squeezed it between both hands, and then worked it up and down like a pump

handle, as if she could get what she wanted out of him so.

"Tell us about education," she demanded.

"Ah—education," he answered. "Your aunt has just been talking to me about education. She thinks you have been foolishly over-educated, and that has made you rough; and she fears for this little lady here"—meaning me—"she is anxious about you, my dear. She has a great loving heart, and every girl is her daughter. She wants you all to *have a good time*." He used this last expression apologetically.

"And so do you," Adalesa exclaimed, on the defensive. She had dropped his arm, and stood frowning intently, and biting one of her fingers between her words. "But, isn't it nonsense? Of course I'm rough. I'm rough on purpose. I'm rougher here than anywhere. If I lived like Evangeline, in cotton wool, I should grow flabby; and she says it's education! When she sees, too, that it hasn't had that effect in this other most notable case"—looking at me. "Tell me all over again about education, Uncle Henry. I'm all ruffled. I want to know."

Sir Henry began to walk up and down the room with his hands behind him. "What we learn is but a small part of education," he said, and it sounded as if he were reflecting aloud. "It is what we think of things, not what we know of them—our opinions—that affect our conduct. If you learn the multiplication table by heart, and merely remember that you know it, the knowledge will have no consequence one way or the other; but if you are taught to think that because you know the multiplication table you ought to be a very high-principled person, you'll

find yourself insensibly seeking to live up to that idea. If, however, on the other hand, you hear continually that a knowledge of the multiplication table must be lowering in effect upon the character—if it is insinuated that your taste will be corrupted by it and your manners coarsened, until the notion that such a consequence is inevitable takes possession of your mind in spite of yourself—then it is only too probable that that will be the case.”

“Now, that is true!” Adalesa exclaimed, “and here are we two in evidence of the fact.”

Sir Henry stopped a moment to look at us, and then resumed his walk. “There’s a great deal of cant rife just now on the subject of women and their education,” he observed, “most of which, being summed up, amounts to a firm conviction that a half-educated girl, a creature who has learnt to live for the pleasure of the moment, to love for the joy of loving, and to marry in order to secure as many of the good things of this world as she can, is in every way a suitable and congenial companion for an educated man, and an admirable specimen of the ‘woman’s-sphere-is-home’ woman. A toy—that’s what the creature is, an unreasonable and illogical toy, neither reason nor logic having entered into the curriculum of that kind of ‘womanly woman,’ it having been supposed that a large establishment is most admirably managed by a mistress whose reasoning powers have never been cultivated, and a young family best brought up on the superstitious practices solemnly confided in mysterious whispers by Mrs. Gamp——”

The windows stood wide open, and Lady Marsh looked in at one of them. “Dearest children!” she cried, “don’t

you see how fine it is? You ought to be out. Adalesa, what are you worrying your uncle about? I am sure he doesn't want you here at this time of day."

V.

IN the afternoon I went out for a ride with Adalesa. Evangeline would not accompany us. She had a packet of sweets in her pocket, and was deep in an entrancing novel by that time, from which she could not be induced to separate herself for the rest of the day, and on the next she had a bad headache. "Which just shows," her mother protested, with gentle emphasis, "how very necessary it is to supervise a young girl's studies, and what it would be if the dear child were being brought up, as too many young ladies are nowadays, alas! learning quite *masculine* matters: it is really dreadful!"

Adalesa looked older and better in her riding dress than I had yet seen her, and perhaps some consciousness of this had its effect upon her manner. So far, while looking like a child, she had talked like a cynical worldly woman; but now, as she took her horse skilfully down a difficult rutty lane, her face fanned by the balmy country air, heavy with odours of full-blown flowers, and at the same time freshened by the near neighbourhood of the sea, there came a far-away look into the girl's eyes, an expression of yearning tenderness which culminated, as seemed most natural, in a long-drawn sigh.

The lane we rode in was a steep by-way—a short cut to the shore, she said—only just wide enough for our two horses abreast, and so uneven that we had to look well to

their going. On either hand green banks, bedecked with foxglove and harebell, rose high above us and before us, making the winding way look like a *cul de sac*, and shutting out all view save that of the sky above us, a radiant strip of sky, intensely blue—blue like a dark sapphire, and full of colour, which contrasted well with the opaque blue-green of a belt of firs that crowned the summit of the bank and held their heavy plumes up motionless against the brightness. The air was so still that inanimate nature scarcely seemed to breathe; but all about us a myriad atoms of life buzzed, and chirped, and fluttered, rejoicing to be, making the most of their moment, and claiming a kinship with us in inarticulate murmurs, quite untranslatable, and yet becoming curiously comprehensible to some sense the longer we lingered to listen to them. The horses glanced hither and thither with big sagacious eyes, flipping a long ear swiftly towards each separate sound—now to the croak of a yellow frog in the grass, and now to the cheep of a nestling up on a branch, the bleat of an unseen sheep in the meadow above to its lamb, the low of a cow to her calf; seemingly anxious to understand, nervously glad to know; gathering the import of everything with an intelligence beyond ours, perhaps, that made them more one with the teeming beings about us than we were.

But after that sigh Adalesa burst into the midst of my meditation abruptly.

“Did you ever feel a glow in your chest, and have little warm shivers run down your backbone, and all the time keep smiling?” she demanded.

“No, never,” I answered decidedly.

“Ah! then you have never been in love,” she observed

in a disappointed tone. "I thought, perhaps, with those eyes,—and you're not so plump either."

"I don't see the connection."

"Why—don't you know? Oh, I think when girls are plump, like Evangeline, it is because they haven't felt much. Now, I'm skinny because I have a burning fiery furnace within that consumes me. So many things—interests, passions, affections,—I don't know what all! are fuel to my fire; it never goes out."

"But love——?" I said, shy of the subject, yet aglow on a sudden with natural girlish curiosity about it, newly inspired; for the moment she mentioned love I knew what was in the air.

She laughed, whipped up her horse, and rode on ahead recklessly.

When I overtook her we were in the open country, on a hard high road, with a long level of fields on either hand, and not a glimpse of the sea.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"Oh, I had forgotten," she answered apologetically. "I was leading you away in the wrong direction. I'm sorry—I was thinking. I was thinking of him!" and she flipped at the hedge with her whip, and laughed in a shamefaced way.

"Of whom?" I asked.

"Of my man," she replied. "Oh, you're obtuse! Don't you gather? I'm in love. Sometimes I'm sick with love—love-sick. But you don't know what that is, and you're a little shocked!" She looked at me keenly. "You think I am committing a breach of decorum. So it would be, perhaps, for most girls; but, don't you

see—with me—oh, you must let it be different with me!”

The high road was taking us towards a belt of wood now, above which the chimneys of the great house appeared, smoking cheerfully.

“Why, we’re going back!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, a little way,” she answered. “I’m sorry. I took the wrong turn. We should have gone to the left through the wood, instead of to the right, down that lane. But here we are. I’d better lead the way. Look out for your hat under the branches!”

The high road ran through the wood at this point, and was bordered on either side by trees, which looked like a forest of slender masts, canopied and curtained with greenery, through which the sunlight filtered in shining shafts, making mystical pathways of dazzling brightness, beyond which the tender gloom beneath the branches deepened perceptibly. Adalesa had turned off under the trees, taking a diagonal course confidently, although there was no track that I could see; but I followed her, now in sunshine and now in shadow, winding in and out about the tree-stems, watchfully, like a princess in a land of weird enchantment, who goes, with wide-open, wistful eyes, seeking to see deep into the verdant shadows, in timidly glad anticipation of something to come that would satisfy the hunger at her heart, that strange importunate ache.

Branches broken by last year’s storms crackled beneath our horses’ feet, or their hoofs sank deep in delicious moss. Rabbits ran at our approach, and the shrill cry or clumsy flight of a startled pheasant sounded oddly insult-

ing, as if uttered to injure the charmed silence. And here again there was life—superabundant, palpitating, generous—a joyous riot, in which we were asked to join by every little living thing that spoke. At first, in the wood, the soothing *susurrus* of leaves, stirred by light airs, sounded incessantly, a sort of softly whispering sound, all-pervading yet unobtrusive, not the main melody, but a manifold accompaniment. Presently, however, we were seized upon by a mightier voice, muffled at first and murmurous, but growing in distinctness and volume as we advanced; and at the same time we ceased to see sunshafts and shadows through the wood; the green depths disappeared; and now between the trees there sparkled into view the yellow sands and the sea. We had come out upon the shore, and both involuntarily drew rein.

“Yes,” Adalesa resumed, as if there had been no break, “you must let it be different with me. I take everything so severely—measles, whooping cough, mumps, scarlatina—all infantile diseases. Each in its turn has threatened to kill me, and now comes this new fever—love. I had to tell Evangeline even. I should have died if I hadn’t said something to some one. But now I am sorry. I wish you had come sooner, Simple Sincerity: you are another sort. If only I hadn’t told Evangeline that we are engaged!”

“Engaged!” I exclaimed. “*Secretly?*”

“Yes: isn’t it dreadful?” she answered, laughing at my horror. “But it happened in this way. I was staying with his people, and he and I were always together because we were the only young pair on the premises;

and at last—oh, the usual thing, you know! And I wanted to tell Uncle Henry, but he seemed to dislike the idea. My father and mother are in India, you know—that is why I am here; and Percy said, weren't they the proper people to be first informed? They are on their way home by this time, I believe, round the Cape—oh, the weary time of waiting! months! And I hate to keep Uncle Henry in the dark. I always tell him everything. But then of course there is Aunt Marsh. If I told him he would make me tell her, and then we should have the affair confided to the whole county in solemn confidence. At least," she corrected herself emphatically, "I don't believe he would tell her; he's too good altogether; and besides, I've told him lots of other things, but I can't make Percy understand, and he says, too, that his knowing would put the affair on quite a different footing—whatever he may mean by that. I hate concealment myself; but perhaps he has finer feelings than I have, for he says something about this being altogether sacred to ourselves—not an ordinary concealment. It sounds all right as he puts it; but I am sadly afraid I don't feel about it quite what he does, because I want to tell. I must talk. My joy bubbles up and bursts out so that I cannot contain it. There's a singing at my heart I can't quite smother; if only Uncle Henry suspected, he would hear it and question me, and then I should be glad indeed—satisfied. Now at times it is only a kind of half glad. However, are you relieved? I am not so sly as you suspected, perhaps."

"I should never have thought you sly," I declared.

"Well, reckless then," she replied, "as when I told

Evangeline. That was an instance of a bubbling up and a bursting out. If I had had Uncle Henry to talk to—but there! Yet I know Evangeline is not to be trusted, for all her promises.”

“Oh, surely she will not betray you if she promised!” I exclaimed, shocked by the accusation.

For a moment the cynical expression returned to Adalese’s face.

“It just depends upon what will suit her own convenience,” she answered, with her usual downright directness.

The horses, tired of standing, sniffed the salt air, tossed their heads, and pawed impatiently.

“We’ll let them go for a gallop in a minute,” she said; “but first, just look at the sea, and listen to it. That inarticulate murmur is full of meaning to me now; and so it is with the sough of the breeze in the branches and the rustle of leaves. Since *he* came into my life I have awakened to full consciousness of a curious kinship with all things animate and inanimate. The gladness in me, the singing in my heart, is all a part of some great whole, some universal plan, something I *know*, but can’t express. But wait!—wait till you know it too!”

She had looked down at the sand as she spoke, frowning intently in the effort to put what she felt into human speech; and her horse, as if waiting upon her words, ceased for the moment to be restive; the very sea-voice seemed suspended, and the scene itself—sandhills, and shore, and grey-white, green-crowned cliffs, curving arm-like about the bay, passed from my consciousness. I saw and heard her alone till she stopped; then the waves rang

out their merry murmur, the cliffs whitened into view in the sunshine, the breeze sang in my ears, the open space invited, and our horses, with one accord, as though they felt our own fine impulse to fly, to be free, plunged out from amongst the heavy, dry drifts, on to the smooth, hard sand, and carried us off at a gallop into another world.

VI.

EVANGELINE came to my room late that night. We had not had an hour's talk together since my arrival. The moon was near the full, and she found me with my window wide open, luxuriating in the sense of stillness, which is peculiar to the exquisite, shadowy, silent night.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a little shiver. "Won't you take cold? Isn't that mist down there on the meadows? and aren't the trees black? It is all so comfortable——"

I shut the window.

"Ah, that's better!" Evangeline pursued, as she curled herself up in an easy chair. "I love lays of the moon, and the ecstatic solitudes one reads about; but the real thing falls far short of the description. I believe those rhapsodies are written in bed at night, with the curtains drawn, and a big fire blazing. At all events, that's the best way to read them. One forgets then, as the poet seems to have forgotten, all the unpleasant details—that it is chilly out in the merry moonlight; fatiguing to linger or loiter long, though it sounds so nice; and too damp to sit, couch, or recline on anything growing or blowing. I love poetry, but preserve me from having to

live it! Cushions and comfort are my delight, ease is my ambition, and all things ordered to please me by some competent person as long as I live, my one desire!"

She cooed all this so prettily that I began to draw an invidious comparison between the sound of her words and of Adalesa's. The sense did not impress me. The gentleness of her manner, the sweetness of her voice, and the charm of her appearance disarmed criticism. One felt at rest in her presence; one did not think.

She left the easy chair, and came and sat down beside me. "Pet me," she said, putting her arms around me. "I don't seem to have seen you at all since you came; and oh, I have such lots of things I want to talk to you about. How pretty your neck is!—just like a baby's. I must kiss it! I could *eat* you, I think, you're so sweet! But you're not very responsive, I must say! I believe you like Adalesa best. Tell me, do you? I should be so miserable if I thought you did. But what do you think of her?"

"I think her delightful."

"So she is," Evangeline answered, returning to her chair. "But isn't it rather a pity, when she's so nice, that she shouldn't be perfect? She does say and do such outrageous things. She has gone and engaged herself secretly." This breach of confidence slipped out so easily and so naturally that I should have hesitated at the moment to apply any harsh epithet to it. "Yes," she pursued; "I met the man in London afterwards, and now he has become quite an ally of mine. When he found I knew all about the affair, he said he was glad, and would like to discuss it with me. You do believe, don't you, that men and women can have Platonic friendships? I think it so

cynical for people not to believe in disinterestedness. He says he loves to talk to me; and of course there can be no harm when it is all about another girl. What do you think?"

"I think I'm inclined to be sorry for the other girl."

"Oh, now that is not nice of you!" she said reproachfully.

"Well, the things that are said about the kind of man who spends all his time with one girl in order to talk about another, are not nice either."

"Oh, but I'm sure *you* would never judge a man by the unkind things people say!" She said this so earnestly, so caressingly, she made me feel mean. "And, besides," she went on gravely, "I don't think he is quite satisfied, somehow. It is not that he says anything, you know, only he makes me fancy—and I think it just as well that the engagement was not announced. If there is any change—if nothing comes of it, you know, nothing can be said. I only tell you about it in confidence, because I know you are safe, and I did so want to consult some one. You see, he confided in me, and asked my advice, and I feel it is such a responsibility. But perhaps Adalesa told you herself. I thought she might, as you get on so well——" She stopped here, and looked at me expectantly, but as I only replied with a steady stare, she demanded, point-blank: "Did she?"

"How can you ask?" I answered without emphasis, so as not to betray my friend; and I saw that she was baffled, but she did not like to repeat the question.

VII.

EVANGELINE had been complaining of some mysterious pain in her arm, and the next day a famous physician who was staying in the neighbourhood came to see her. He was brought to our sitting-room, and I helped Evangeline, at her mother's request, to take off her bodice, to enable him to see what was the matter with the pretty limb. It was evident that the old gentleman was interested in his charming patient, his manners, which were naturally suave, took on such an obviously extra shade of delicate, courtly consideration. Standing a little apart with Adalesa, I became deeply interested in his method of inquiring into the cause of the trouble; but he talked about "the long bone of the arm," until at last, bored by the repetition, I ventured to vary the monotony for him by suggesting the word *humerus* aside to her.

The doctor overheard me, however. "Oh—hem—ha—yes," he observed deliberately, giving me to understand at the same time, with a look, that I had sunk low in his estimation; after which he took no further notice of me.

"I am afraid you offended the doctor, dear," Lady Marsh said afterwards. "You really must be careful by what names you call things. You see, any indelicacy in a young lady shocks a refined and cultivated man."

"But *humerus* is the proper name of the bone," I ventured, with a faint flicker of spirit, in spite of the softly smothery effect of her manner.

"We do not call things by their proper names," she answered with gentle dignity.

"But is it really more delicate to call it the long bone

of the arm?" I exclaimed. "Do forgive me for pestering you, dear Lady Marsh," I added, seeing a shade of disapproval on her face; "but I am always being met with queer contradictions and singular gradations of right and wrong, and the effort to understand them wearies my brain."

"Of course!" she exclaimed, triumphantly. "That is what I and any sensible person would have foreseen. A young girl's brain must suffer if she studies subjects only fit for men."

When we were alone, Adalesa asked me what I thought now of her sweet Aunt Marsh.

"I am trying to allow for opposite points of view," I answered, laughing.

But in my heart I acknowledged that Adalesa had not exaggerated; for the mental agonies that perfectly delightful woman caused me to suffer, on account of the difference between her point of view and that from which I had been brought up, no one who has not been a girl under similar circumstances can possibly conceive. I began to wonder at last, when I got up in the morning, what I should blunder about that day; and from the easy absence of self-consciousness which comes of living among people who encourage discussion and allow the most extreme differences of opinion as a matter of course, I became so nervous that I shrank from speaking at all, or if by chance I did commit myself, I would have recanted every syllable in my extreme timidity rather than suffer the disapproval I detected in the attitude of those about me. Lady Marsh laboured incessantly to repair the errors of my education; and often she talked for an hour

without provoking me to say anything offensive, but the moment she interested me, the moment she roused me to think for myself, I was lost. The duty of being a social success was one of her favourite themes; and she considered it the beginning of wisdom for a woman to make herself attractive. So did my mother; but when it came to ways and means, their principles were diametrically opposed to each other. Lady Marsh often talked to us girls earnestly on the subject, her teaching, as I now perceive, having been a fair mixture of worldly wisdom and amiable foolishness. So far as our conversation was concerned, it might be summed up in the advice: never to dispute; never utter an emphatic word; talk principally about little things that have happened; to recount and to listen well is the great thing; men like to be listened to; but as we valued our reputations for womanliness we were never to express opinions. It was really better not to have any. Men do not care about women who have opinions. But it was upon the subject of personal appearance that she was greatest. A girl who was good-looking was a matter of grave importance to her, and she would appraise the marriage-market value of us all quite seriously, but never would have allowed the calculation to be defined by any such expression. She would have called it "considering our prospects of happiness." She expected Evangeline, whom she considered a poem in appearance; to make a brilliant match; and she was graciously pleased to express some hope for me too: "Only you *must* be careful, dear. Don't let a man imagine for a moment that you have ever thought about anything." But for Adalesa she had little hope. "She might marry

a Radical Member, or something of that sort," she said to me confidentially one day, but she spoke dubiously. "She is so thin, you see," she added.

We were waiting with Evangeline for tea in the drawing-room, and Adalesa herself came in at that moment with her bull pup under her arm.

"I'm the thin party, I expect," she said, her dark eyes dancing mischievously.

"Party, dear child!" Lady Marsh ejaculated. "What an expression for a young lady!"

"Diddums, den!" Adalesa said to the bull pup. "Just look at him, auntie, how he wrinkles his forehead."

"I wish, dear, you would not bring that creature into the drawing-room; he is not a proper pet for a young lady."

"But, Aunt Marsh, men love sporting dogs," Adalesa remonstrated, with an injured air. "And he'll be what I never shall, and that's a beauty of his kind."

"You make a great mistake," Lady Marsh answered. "Any girl not absolutely ugly may be good-looking if she will, and you might be most elegant with that slender figure if you chose. And then also *manner* goes a good way. A girl with a very gentle, rather timid manner is irresistible to most men. Men like women to be dependent and clinging. And further, I know, for a fact, that if you bring up a girl to be a beauty she will develop into one."

"It's odd that you should say that," Adalesa answered ambiguously, "for I was just thinking something of the same sort. I was thinking if you bring up a girl to be wise she will be wise; but the custom is to bring up a girl to be a fool."

"Your mother used to be a lovely girl," Lady Marsh said to me, pointedly ignoring Adalesa. "I suppose she wishes her daughters to be beautiful."

"My mother does not despise beauty, but she considers it a charming incident, that cannot last, rather than a serious object in life," I blundered.

A solemn silence followed upon this, which Lady Marsh broke at last by remarking to Evangeline, with significant sweetness,—

"There is something wrong about that dress at the waist, dearest. It drags."

"I'll tighten my stays, mamma," Evangeline answered amiably.

"You'll make your nose red if you do—or *bust!*" Adalesa observed, with her mouth full of cake.

"Adalesa, how *can* you!" her aunt remonstrated.

It was interesting to see Evangeline expand sympathetically under her mother's teaching. Her mind imbibed it with reverence as well as with relish, but to what it would be transformed when it was thoroughly assimilated, girls like ourselves could not foresee. From a chance remark of Sir Henry's, however, I gathered that he had his doubts about its being a soul-making substance.

VIII.

LADY MARSH was by way of doing her best for us, as the society mothers delicately express it, and one of the delights of that visit was to be a ball.

The joy of that ball began for us from the first moment it was discussed. In a matter of that kind Lady Marsh

knew how to make girls happy, and she let us arrange it all ourselves and choose our own dresses. We sent to town for specimen programmes, and drew up a formal invitation, which we had printed; and when the cards arrived we spent a long delicious morning in our sitting-room addressing them. There were no improving books about on that occasion. The table was covered with invitations and envelopes, and we all three talked nineteen to the dozen as we addressed the latter, making many mistakes in our eagerness and glee, and giving ourselves much unnecessary trouble; but it was all a part of the pleasure.

Lady Marsh came in during the morning, and found the floor strewn with evidences of these mistakes; but she only smiled indulgently.

Then came the discussion about the dresses. We decided upon red, white, and blue. Adalesa's was to be red, with coral ornaments, because of her dark eyes and hair, and olive skin. Pale passion colour, she chose, and it looked like an expression of herself. Evangeline's was to be white—white satin with tulle and pearls, the kind of conventional thing a young lady looks her loveliest in; and also, perhaps, in that it was conventional, an exact expression of herself. Mine was to be pale blue; "Because of your white skin, my dear," Adalesa said. "And also because simple sincerity should be in true blue. Your ornaments must be turquoise and pearls and diamonds. Do you happen to have any?"

I laughed, as at an absurdity, for I was not an heiress.

The discussion about the dresses took place at luncheon one day, and Sir Henry paid much amused attention to our chatter.

"But where are you to get these fine gowns?" he asked.

"Where are we to get the money for them, you mean?" said Adalesa.

Sir Henry looked at Lady Marsh expressively, and then Lady Marsh beamed round upon us: "My dears, I am going to give you your dresses," she said.

The next excitement was the coming of the answers to the invitations. Adalesa slipped up to me shyly one morning, with very bright eyes and very pale cheeks. "He has accepted," she said, in a breathless whisper. "He is coming." The words were gasped between two sighs, heavy with heart-beats. From that time the tire-some child in her slumbered and slept. She never "drew" Aunt Marsh now, and she had rolled up her elf-locks and left off short petticoats. She was feverishly flushed for the most part, but she was very quiet, and would steal away alone for a ramble through the woods or a ride by the sea: "To listen to the voices," as she said; "to be one with Nature, which *knows*——"

Evangeline also knew that "he" was coming, and mentioned the matter with a self-satisfied smile: "O dear! I suppose I shall be called upon again to resolve doubts and difficulties," she observed.

"You don't mean that he will take you into his confidence when she is here!" I exclaimed.

She smiled again enigmatically. "Well, really—one never knows," she said. "I can't think how it could ever have happened. But, there! you know Adalesa. Wait till you see him, and then judge if she is suitable. It is so lucky, I think, the engagement was never announced."

She smiled complacently when she had spoken, then blushed at nothing, and finally ran away laughing. I could not make her out.

Our lovely dresses arrived some days before the event, and were duly doted upon. It seemed as if our delight had culminated in them, and could rise no higher; but when we went to dress for dinner on the eventful day itself, three cries of joy, uttered simultaneously in our three respective rooms, announced yet another item added to our ecstasy, for there, on our dressing-tables, a present from Sir Henry, were the very jewels Adalesa had described as essential to complete our happiness.

When we were dressed we ran down to the drawing-room together, with our arms round each other, red, white, and blue, all silk, satin, and tulle, to be inspected, only expecting to see the old people; but there, on the hearth-rug, stood a romantic-looking young man, tall, with deep dark eyes, a stranger to me, but I knew in a moment who it was. I had met him in many books, and dreamt about him too. I knew him first by the way Evangeline started and Adalesa hung back. My own heart beat to suffocation when his eyes met mine; but what with dresses and jewels and joyful anticipations, it was a highly emotional moment with all three of us—this last element, a young man to admire us, having completed the circle.

Evangeline was the first to recover herself and greet him, and then she introduced him to me; and Adalesa, at last, summoning her courage, shyly held out a seemingly reluctant hand, the damask rose on her cheeks deepening the while; but the magnetism of her dark

eyes was absent from her greeting, as she never raised them from the ground.

The young man looked from one to the other of us with a kind of pleased surprise.

"Three Graces, by Jove!" Sir Henry exclaimed, as he received our thanks. "Impossible to choose between them. I'd turn Mohammedan if I were a young man."

"Then you wouldn't marry me," Adalesa flashed out at him.

"That's right, my dear," answered he good-humouredly. "I like your spirit and the way you show it. None of your pet pussy-cat girls for me, concealing their claws till they're married. You stick to that—the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, or nothing."

Several more guests arrived for dinner. Evangeline whispered to her mother. It is strange how one sometimes sees the significance of things one cannot hear on occasions of excitement, when all our faculties are on the alert. Until Evangeline spoke to her mother I had not thought of whom Mr. Perceval would take in to dinner, but both question and answer occurred to me on the instant. Evangeline had suggested, and Lady Marsh, not knowing, had acquiesced: he was to take Evangeline in, and, as he offered his arm to her, he looked into her eyes ardently. He looked at me, however, in just the same way a moment later, and I thought, perhaps, that that was his habitual expression; but all the same I began to feel sore and sorry for Adalesa.

They sat opposite to me at table, and talked together in undertones confidentially, Evangeline cooing softly and looking lovely all the time, while Adalesa, poor

child, a little lower down, out of some growing feeling of dissatisfaction, uttered small aggressive raileries in high-pitched tones, doing more damage to her own cause thereby than any one else could have done. I intercepted a glance of disapproval from the other side of the table, and felt that comparisons were inevitable. Lady Marsh, who was not far from Adalesa, put in an amiable remonstrance at last:—"Now, dearest," she began, smiling, "do not rail, it is such a bad habit, and people are so apt to think you mean it—ill-natured people, of course," she hastened to add generally, beaming round on us all as if begging us to observe that she considered it impossible to include us in such a category.

But the remonstrance was unfortunate from Lady Marsh's point of view, as its immediate effect was to stimulate Adalesa to one of those flashes of mature opinion which her aunt considered so undesirable in a girl:—"Ah, you don't know the value of railery, Aunt Marsh," she burst out. "I believe myself that it is the railers who do all the good in the world. They are the first cause of a change for the better, because when they don't like things, they have a way of expressing themselves which is so exceedingly disagreeable to those who only want to be content and not think, that the latter are only too glad to accept their suggestions in order to silence them. It is really the heathen railers who keep a spark of religion alight in the land; they show up the difference between precept and practice, and make the professors ashamed of their own inconsistencies."

Lady Marsh shook her head solemnly:—"Dear child, what have you been reading now?" she exclaimed, and

then she meandered off in an undertone to her next neighbour on the necessity of supervising a girl's education.

"Poor Adalesa!" Evangeline murmured, with a deprecating sigh. "But she is *such* a child! And of course she will get over all these exaggerated ideas when she is older and has more sense."

"With such gentle womanly surroundings she should," he answered, gazing again at Evangeline, whose white bosom heaved with another little sigh.

"But is it not strange that the sense should be so long in coming," she said, "considering that Adalesa has had exactly the same opportunities——?" She stopped, blushing alluringly, as if modestly afraid of even having indicated herself.

After dinner she singled me out for a confidence. "Hasn't he exquisite Oriental eyes?" she said. "And don't you think I succeeded?"

"I hope not: how do you mean?" I stammered.

"Succeeded in preventing any suspicion," she answered.

"I was so afraid mamma might see something."

"Oh, I don't think you need have alarmed yourself," I dryly rejoined.

"But, now, *do* you think they are suited?" she asked, in a tenderly anxious tone.

"I think that is altogether their business," I replied.

She looked at me reproachfully, and then left me.

Mr. Perceval danced with me several times during the evening, and towards the end of the ball we were engaged for another dance; but when the time came I was tired, so we decided to sit it out. His manner the whole evening had shocked and offended me, as the manner of a

married man who wanted to flirt would have done. He was Adalesa's property, and yet I felt that upon the slightest encouragement he would have made love to me; and I had an uncomfortable doubt as to how far he might not actually have gone with Evangeline, which proved that my faith in her was shaken. I judged him harshly then—I think I could have called him a villain—but now all I feel is a sort of amused contempt for him for acting after his kind, an ordinary animal kind. He was a commonplace young man in the mood for marriage, and would have made any one of us three that had chanced to accept him a good and agreeable husband—or rather his wife would have made him pretty much what she pleased.

Because of my suspicion of him I chose to sit in the ball-room so as not to give him a chance; and, finding I would not flirt, he sat beside me quietly, and turned his attention to Evangeline and Adalesa, who were dancing, observing them closely and comparing them, as I suspected—a comparison which was far from fair to Adalesa at that age; for she was one of those girls who, in appearance, mature late. Her active mind gave her slender body no leisure to cushion itself with redundant plumpness. Evangeline might, as her mother maintained, be a poem in appearance, but Adalesa was one in fact in spite of her angles. This ordinary young man, however, with only an ideal of fleshly perfection in his mind and before his eyes, was not likely to suspect it; and, even if he had, what pleasure would it have been to him, or profit, seeing that he had no capacity to appreciate a poem?

Judged, too, merely upon that kind of observation, there was another point against Adalesa. She did not

waltz well, but Evangeline floated like thistledown above the boards. Adalesa soon wearied of waltzing; she thought it monotonous, and only went on to the end of the ball to make herself useful. She excelled, however, in a higher branch of the art, to her aunt's horror. We should call it skirt-dancing now, and be applauded for the accomplishment; but at that time it was a nameless enormity for a young lady to indulge in. Adalesa, nevertheless, would take her castanets sometimes, and give us an entrancing benefit of "woven paces and of waving arms"; but Lady Marsh regularly put down this exhibition when she caught her at it; and it was hardly likely the young man knew of the accomplishment, nor could one expect him to appreciate the self-sacrifice Adalesa was making when she accepted one eligible partner after another the whole evening, "boring herself to one, two, three, turn, for the good of the house," as she elegantly expressed it.

There came to me a curious fancy as I watched those girls. I seemed to see the soul of each through the casing of finery and flesh that enveloped them.

"One of the two is as good as gold without alloy," I said to Perceval; "but the other is——"

"An inferior compound?" he suggested; "and I know which it is."

But he looked at the wrong one; and I let him, for I did not think him worth pure gold, for all his "exquisite Oriental eyes."

When the dance was over he left me, and Adalesa took his place. It had been pathetic to watch her during the evening. Her eyes had been eloquent at first of shy ex-

pectation, half joyful, half frightened ; but then came surprise and inquiry ; then an interregnum of blankness, no explanation occurring to her ; and now the expression was altogether pained.

“ My heart is heavy within me,” she said, in a whispering way she had, which made me think of the soft sighing of summer air through the leaves. “ He seems to have forgotten.”

From where we sat I particularly noticed one of the decorations of the ball-room—a great palm, standing in a corner between a window and a door, and all in shadow with the exception of one long leaf, which it held to the light, one glossy dark green leaf, that shone and quivered like a sentient thing in the fitful airs set in motion by the whirl of the dancers. It seemed to be taking its part in the revel with delight. It had its moments of excitement when the music went mad towards the end of a dance, and the pace became frantic. Then it would flutter fan-like with pennants streaming in time to the tune, and only gradually cease to wave as the room emptied, after the crash of the final chords. I was fascinated by the emotions of that leaf, or rather its demonstrations of emotion, and found myself gauging the success of the entertainment by it. When the spirit of the ball was at its highest, there seemed to be an extra shine on its glossy surface, but as the night waned and exhaustion began to sap the energy of the dancers, the dust settled and the leaf grew dim. It quivered still as the rooms thinned, but no longer waved ; and when the last carriage had driven away I found it drooping in the vitiated air. There was a lounge beneath it, and on this Evangeline, who was also droop-

ing by this time, had thrown herself. I had seen her, during the evening, sitting there with Perceval, laughing and looking into his eyes. The arm of the plant was held out over her then, but whether menacingly or whether to protect her, I could not tell. It might have had an evil spirit in it encouraging her to her destruction, or a good one warning her back; and my imagination busied itself with both possibilities. I longed to be allowed to look into the future for a moment, so that I might see enough to interpret the sign; but my soul yearned and ached on in that direction vainly: it was all impenetrably dark. From that moment, however, the great glossy plume of the palm seemed somehow to be specially associated with Evangeline, and before I saw them drooping together I had felt that I should find her there.

Lady Marsh had retired by that time, the men were in the smoking-room, and only we three girls were left of the brilliant crowd that had flaunted there so short a time before. Scraps of ribbon and lace and tulle, torn gloves and faded flowers, bedraggled flotsam and jetsam of the ball, strewed the floor. At the farther end of the room a servant was putting out the lights.

"I am tired to death," Evangeline said, with a yawn.

"Tired, but happy, I hope?" Adalesa answered, with peculiar gentleness.

Evangeline looked sharply at her, doubtless to see if she meant it, before she replied with effusion: "Oh, yes, darling, thank you. I *have* enjoyed myself! I hope we all have! But I'm dying of hunger."

I went with Adalesa to fetch something to eat from the supper-room, and at the same time I brought a jug of water for the palm.

IX.

PERCEVAL had come down for the dance, and was to stay a few days. He was in every way an eligible, and Lady Marsh was exceedingly gracious to him; but I could see that Sir Henry was inspecting him critically, as if he were not sure of him, and our attitude towards the young man also came in for a share of Sir Henry's attention. Mine was morose, I confess; in Adalesa's eyes was perpetual pained inquiry; only Evangeline was natural and happy. She was extra gentle, and gracious too, as if amiably disposed to atone for what must have looked like our shortcomings.

The morning after the great event we did nothing but discuss the ball. At luncheon, however, Sir Henry suggested that we should go out: "Rest is the right thing after a dance," he said, "and then exercise in the open air. You four young people should go for a ride."

Evangeline put on a pretty little pout. "I am afraid I can't," she said, in a heigh-ho tone. "My horse has gone to be shod."

"I wondered why you insisted on sending him this morning," Adalesa muttered.

"But why shouldn't you three go without me?" Evangeline said sweetly.

"Why shouldn't you ride some other horse?" Sir Henry asked, rather sternly.

"Nothing would induce me to," she answered with

her set smile, looking him full in the face; after which she rose with an easy, unconstrained air, carefully brushed a crumb from the front of her dress, and left the room, humming a little tune.

Adalesa had also risen from the table.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, following her into the hall.

"Nothing," she answered, sombrely. "Evangeline is going to carry out some manoeuvre of her own."

"Adalesa!" Lady Marsh called.

We returned to the dining-room. The two old people were still at table, but Perceval was standing at one of the open windows, looking out into the garden.

"Just run upstairs, dear child," Lady Marsh added, "and see if you can find my yellow-and-black sunshade. It's somewhere, I'm sure."

Adalesa complied without a word, but she sauntered off slowly, as if reluctant to go.

"That child is *so* ungracious at times," Lady Marsh observed to Sir Henry in a stage aside. "She compares unfavourably with Evangeline, I am afraid. Evangeline is *always* so sweetly unselfish and good."

Sir Henry pursed up his mouth, and toyed with a glass on the table. Perceval's back was turned to us, but I fancied I saw him stiffen to attention when Lady Marsh mentioned Evangeline, and I believed the young man had heard and marked, for all the air of indifference with which he affected to look out over the lawn.

It was one of those radiant days when one seems to see the heat throbbing in the crystal atmosphere. The garden borders were a blaze of colour. The odour of mignon-

ette streamed in through the open windows. Perceval looked out sleepily a little longer; then suddenly the dreamy look in his eyes gave way to a flash of interest. He said something about fetching a hat, and left the room as if with a purpose. Evangeline had appeared on the other side of the lawn, lingering among the roses, with a pair of scissors in her hand; but, judging by the way she lifted a heavy bud here, touching it tenderly, or stooped to inhale the fragrance of a full-blown flower there, she was reluctant to gather them. Perhaps she thought it cruel to shorten their pretty lives! At all events she hesitated, and in that attitude she made a charming picture; and I am sure Perceval must have thought so as he crossed the lawn. She had apparently not heard him approach, for she started and blushed when he accosted her, then looked up and said something in her winning way, to which he responded smiling. Then they turned off down a shady alley together, and disappeared from sight.

Adalesa returned without the parasol, but Lady Marsh did not seem disturbed because she had failed to find it.

The whole day passed, looking like other days on the surface, and the night with its heavy shadows settled down silently. When we went to bed I hoped Adalesa would come to my room and talk the trouble out, and I waited awhile, but as she did not come I went to her. She had taken off her dress, and was standing at her window looking out. Her bull dog sat beside her on the floor, leaning against her and looking up at her sympathetically. I was oppressed by a horrid sense of things gone wrong, and he seemed to be suffering from the same.

"I thought I had said good-night to you," Adalessa muttered, turning on me as I entered.

"I hoped you would come to my room," I replied.

She looked at me intently from under her dark eyebrows; but I doubt if she saw me.

"He has not spoken," she said at last. "He treats me as if we had never met before. That is all there is to tell you. Now go: excuse me, but I am better alone. I want to think."

The dog whined and nestled up closer, and the sound of a great, deep, human sigh, almost a moan, accompanied me down the dark corridor as I returned to my room.

But my nerves were strained by that time. My own breath came in a succession of sighs; and, in order to tranquillise myself, I went and sat by the open window, and leant out, looking at the misty margins of the moon-lit spaces, and listening to the inarticulate murmurs of the night. Very soon the sense of silence settled upon my spirit soothingly, and I was beginning to feel as if I could lie down and rest, when all at once my attention was quickened by a sharp sound from below—the sound of gravel crunched by a springy footstep. I knew who it was before I saw her. What was she going to do? And oh, what a waste of good emotion upon a worthless object all this seemed!

I had taken off my evening dress when I came upstairs, and now had only to slip on a cap and a pair of walking shoes, which I did not wait to lace, and snatch a long cloak from my wardrobe, and I was ready to follow her. I had to put the cloak on and button it as I went, but I was in time to see which road she took. It was the

road through the wood to the sea. She had on her shortest gown again, with her elf-locks hanging, and nothing on her head. Her faithful brindle, rubbing up against her still, endeavoured to keep pace with her, snuffling as he went. I could hear him. But she took no notice of him. She was looking on ahead with the same kind of look, I imagined, as that with which she had greeted me when I went to her room; yet her gait was not at all agitated, but rather lingering, as if she were taking the air in a leisurely way. Had I not known she was in trouble I should have supposed that she was enjoying the novelty of being out alone at that hour. It was dark in the wood, but she seemed sure of the way, and walked on confidently until she passed out from under the trees on to the sand-dunes. Here she paused a moment, looking up to where, on the left, the tall cliffs rose bold and black against the night sky. On in front the moonlight silvered the sea. It was a desolate scene. The tide was a long way out. For a moment I thought she was going to turn back, but she was merely looking about her before she went a little farther on and sat herself down on the shore. Her dog nestled closer, and uttered a piteous "Whuff!" and then she looked at him for the first time, and put her arm round him, and rested her cheek on his big broad forehead, which seemed to satisfy him.

I made a little *détour* to the right among the sand-hills, and stole up closer, so as to see her without being seen. She was gazing at the broad path of light made by the moon on the water. She was passionately fond of her father, and that was the way he would come. Did she remember?

The wind soughed among the sandhills, rustling the rank grass. The eternal sea-song sounded afar off, muffled, monotonous, yet mighty in that it was eternal. It made me wonder once more if the sufferings of such ephemeral specks in the great universe as we are could possibly signify. We seemed so unimportant, out there on the barren sands, that, for the first time for twenty-four hours, I ceased to care what became of us. I lay my length upon the dry, white sand, pillowing my head upon my folded arms in front of me, inhaling deep draughts of the sea-sweet air and rejoicing in its healthy fragrance. Then for awhile I watched the gem-like stars shine out in the radiant blue dark above me, and saw the shadows shift upon the cliffs, and the sea approaching. By that light the wavelets showed black-grey, like shining flints, with chalk-white rims for crests. When Adalesa sat down they were too far off to be distinguished except as a dark, moving mass, relieved by burnished sparks and flashes of moonlight; but before she rose they were close upon her; the moon had set, the stars were extinguished, and low down in the east the grey dawn shone primrose and green and white shot with flame in opaline splendour.

X.

I BELIEVE in my heart that Sir Henry, in his quiet way, had more real sympathy with us girls, and more comprehension of us, than Lady Marsh, for all her demonstrations. It was to him I should have gone in any trouble rather than to her, I know; and I suppose Adalesa felt the same; for when she crawled down next

morning, very late, she encountered me in the hall, and asked me where he was, and then, slipping her hand through my arm, drew me along with her to look for him. He was sitting alone in the dining-room in an easy-chair, reading a newspaper, which he put down when we entered. Adalesa went up to him and kissed him, and then sat herself down on the arm of his chair. She moved listlessly, as if there were no life left in her, and looked ill, and I could see that her uncle observed her with particular attention as she approached.

"You did not come down to breakfast," he said tentatively.

"No," she answered. Then she put her arm round his neck, and rested her cheek on his head. "I don't want to come down again," she added, with an effort. "I want to go away from here—at once."

Sir Henry seemed to reflect. "What is the matter, little girl?" he said at last. "Any thing mentionable?"

"No," she answered. "I want to go and meet my father. If you will telegraph to Aunt Morris she will be glad to have me. I want to wait for him there, in town."

Again Sir Henry took time to reflect. "Well," he said at last, slowly, "you shall go, and at once too, if you like."

He looked at me when she left us. "You know what is wrong, I suppose?" he said.

"Nothing mentionable," I answered.

He smiled at the retort, and then shook his head. "Not mentionable," he repeated—"no, nor visible. One scents it, though, without seeing it. One feels it in the air. It is knowable without being nameable. But if one

could name it one would call it——” He gave me one of his shrewd glances.

“Treachery,” I blurted out. “Robbery with violence—and you will be sanctioning it with a blessing by-and-by.”

He seemed amused at my vehemence. “It is contrary to the law to condemn without proof,” he said. “I am here to administer the law, and if I am not furnished with any proof of guilt, I must acquit.”

And so it seemed, for my tongue was tied.

I should have expected fight rather than flight from Adalesa; but perhaps some sense of the unworthiness of such a contest restrained her, for the girl was self-respecting.

She left us early that afternoon, “to await her father’s arrival in town”—which was great nonsense, Lady Marsh said, since it was so uncertain when he would come; but Adalesa could do what she liked with her uncle, and when he ordered there was nothing for it but to obey.

Late that night Evangeline came to my room in a flutter. “It is *just* as I suspected,” she burst out. “He has told me all about it. He never really loved her. But he did not know his own mind until——”

“Until you stepped in?”

“Until she went off in that heartless way to-day. He was afraid she might care for him, but you see for yourself *now*! So he has written to tell her he understands by her going that she wishes to be released, and therefore he offers to release her. He didn’t utter a word of reproach, I know, for he showed me the letter.”

“Noble creature!” I ejaculated.

"Is he not!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm. "And—oh, don't be cold and horrid!" She caught my arm and fairly shook me in her wild excitement. "*Do* congratulate me!"

"What, so soon?" I cried aghast.

"Oh, you *won't* understand," she rejoined, wringing her hands. "Yet you know, you *must* know, that a young man may make a mistake. They were utterly unsuited. It is all for the best. They would only have made each other miserable."

"Well, perhaps you are right," I said, upon reflection. "Adalesa is certainly difficult. And she is far above the average too. But I shall wait for the second part of the piece before I offer any of you my congratulations."

"You *are* horrid!" Evangeline exclaimed, with tears of mortification in her eyes. "And now I know why some of the girls at school said nasty things about you."

PART II.

"I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf."

XI.

It arrived to me, as the French phrase it, to wait once more for a midday train at that same station from which I journeyed on the occasion when Adalesa and I had first encountered each other, and to lose myself—and my train again, very nearly—in the contemplation of the crowd about me. Pullman cars had come into existence by this

time; and instead of coming to in a third-class compartment, as on that first occasion, I awoke in my rightful place in one of these; and, on looking out of the window on my left, saw something familiar in the shifting scene that recalled the bygone time with a flash. Involuntarily I glanced to the opposite end of the carriage; and there, on the same side as myself, facing me, sat a slender, elegant woman, whose dark eyes met mine with a look of inquiry, which resulted in a sudden mutual recognition of each other. We rose simultaneously, and meeting halfway, embraced, there being no spectator, happily, whose presence might have checked the impulse. Adalesa returned with me to my corner and sank into the opposite seat.

"History repeats itself," she said.

"Only the framework: the details are different," I replied, recalling the tall, gaunt girl, who had thrown herself so recklessly across the intervening space, and comparing her with this richly-dressed woman, whose every move was marked with a slow, deliberate grace, as captivating as it was dignified. "When we first met we had everything to look forward to, but now we must both look back."

"True," she said. "Yet our destination is the same, I imagine. I am again going to my Aunt Marsh."

"So am I," I answered, "to welcome Evangeline back from Brazil. I haven't seen her since her marriage. Her husband is something out there, isn't he?"

"Yes—silver, or diamonds, or something. Dear Perceval! Do you remember him? But of course you remember him!" she concluded, in the old downright way,

laughing a little as she spoke. Then she said, with a sigh, seriously, "But if you have not met any of them since the marriage, I am afraid you will see great changes."

"Changes are what one always seems to be seeing from the moment one has lived long enough to compare this with that," I answered. "Just now I am conscious of a great change in myself. You didn't notice me 'peacocking' about the station this time, and wonder if I were anybody because of the airs I gave myself."

Adalesa smiled.

"And I don't want to read the advertisements any more. Just look at the hideous procession! I vow I never will use anything that is advertised to death like that."

"It would be no pleasure to you now to be recognised?" Adalesa asked.

"Oh, none," I answered. "I caught my train to-day because I heard my name mentioned, and slunk into the carriage for fear my face should also be known. Yet I remember what the joy would have been——"

"Had it come earlier? But you anticipated it. I remember so many sayings of yours that show you must have felt you would be known."

"Tell me about yourself," I put in.

"Oh, I am distinguished too in my own way," she answered, in the old vein. "I lounge about the world, loving my husband, and longing for the babes that never come; and it is such an extraordinary thing for a duchess to do that I get a kind of credit for it, which I enjoy. You always said I should end by being something eccentric."

"What became of Brindle?" I asked.

"Poor dear old boy!" she ejaculated. "He attained to an honourable old age, and only lately—left me."

"Do you remember that night on the shore?" slipped from me unawares.

She raised her eyebrows, and looked at me interrogatively; and then I was obliged to confess that I had followed her. "I thought you had some desperate intent," I explained, apologetically.

"Such an idiotic idea would never have occurred to me," she answered bluntly. "It is your old-fashioned people who do that. I knew even then that there are more emotions than one worth living for, if I did not suspect that even that one, when abortive, might repeat itself perfectly. The barren sands, with the sea, and the night sky arching over all, invited me, that was all. I stole out to secure the sense of immensity which is sustaining and ennobling as well as being restful. I thought I should find there what would enable me to renounce—and I succeeded. I am most devoutly thankful to say that I succeeded." She had clasped her hands as she uttered these words, and was silent for a little afterwards. Then her countenance cleared, and she turned to me with the air of one who has put something serious aside, and means to be brighter. "Tell me about yourself," she said. "Why did you never answer my letters?"

"For fear of having to do so again!" I replied.

"Try another," she said, smiling.

"Because I had nothing to say."

"That's no better. Once more."

"Well, because I had too much to say."

"I should think so!" she ejaculated.

"And after all," I protested, "I am only an onlooker. I am always an onlooker, with no claim to a personality of my own which would interest my friends. I see and foresee. I have seen the setting of several old ideas, and the dawn of divers new ones. The electric light has come to extinguish the gas, and London is bursting out into flats, huge caravansaries, admirably arranged for the cremation of the dead in case of fire. Eternal punishment no longer holds up its head; and the commercial part of the church enterprise will soon be in a bad way if the priests don't discover that we shall all reappear rich and beautiful on earth if we are good. That is all I can think of at this moment."

Adalesa's eyes twinkled, but she said nothing; and we both looked out of the window in silence for awhile, the truth being that we were suffering from the pressure of too much to say, so that our words only came out in jerks like water plug-glugging from full bottles. We had not met because I had been abroad so much; but of course we had received all the important heads of intelligence concerning each other; and I confess that I crowed when the news came that Adalesa had proved to have been her Aunt Marsh's ugly duckling by marrying a duke.

At the station we found carriages waiting for us and our servants; Barkins, now a very old man, being on the box of one of them.

"Ah, Barkins, my friend, how are you?" Adalesa exclaimed, reaching up to shake hands with him. "So you've come to drive me yourself? I call that kind; for

I know you don't often drive anybody but her ladyship now."

"Eh," he rejoined, touching his hat, "I'd be main bad when I didn't come to fetch your grace. You'll not be driving madam there to-day, perhaps?" he added, grinning.

"Barkins will never forget our first arrival together," Adalesa said, when we were seated. "But, oh, the like in unlikeness to-day! Look round: the station—the trees—the fields—the very dust on the road is exactly the same; but look at us! My heart contracts; yet I don't know why, for I am happier now——"

She did not finish the sentence; but I knew what she meant, for I felt very much the same. There was a certain solemn satisfaction in the feeling, though I cannot explain it; but I would not have had the day that was dead back for all "the tender grace" of it. One change in myself I noticed with interest. The first time I had driven along that road I was all anticipation, but now I found in myself nothing but reflection. The principal events in life lay behind me; I could think of but little more that there might be to come.

As we approached the house, I was again struck with the air of affluence about the place. It looked like a toy territory, all spick and span, and there was such an affectation of defence about it in the crenelated walls that bounded the chase, and the castellation of every building, from lodge to coach-house, that one almost expected to see ornamental soldiers at regular intervals, ordering arms mechanically.

Lady Marsh did not come out to meet us this time—

another note of change. She found it necessary to save herself as much as possible now. But she rose and came forward to receive us with the stiff haste of age, when we were shown into the drawing-room, embraced us both tenderly, then held us off from her, each by a hand, looked at us, shook her head, sighed, and looked again, especially at me, whom she had not seen in the interval. While we were greeting each other, Sir Henry came pottering in—oh, so shrunken in appearance, but more benign than ever. Adalesa seized upon him, hugged him, wheeled up a big easy chair for him, and then sat herself down on a stool at his feet, with her arm on his knee. The old man's hand wandered over her head, and rested on her neck, and she took it in hers and held it, after which they both seemed satisfied.

"Adalesa, darling, it is so sweet to see you again," Lady Marsh exclaimed, turning round upon her just as she had settled herself; "but wouldn't you be more comfortable in a proper chair?"

"We're all right, thank you, dear Aunt Marsh," Adalesa said; and I saw her signal to her uncle by squeezing his hand, upon which he leant back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling abstractedly. But the little scene was reassuring, showing as it did that in point of character there was no disheartening difference here.

There were three other ladies present—Lady Parkinson and Miss Creamer Patterson, both women of property living in the neighbourhood, who had come to call; and a Mrs. Crowther, who was staying in the house, a somewhat simpering, excessively-dressed, youngish person, the kind of pretty thing who lights up when men

are present, but languishes if there are only ladies in the room.

Before we had well settled ourselves, yet another lady, of much the same age and type as Mrs. Crowther, but looking more animated for the moment, hurried across the lawn, entered by one of the open windows, and proceeded to embrace Adalesa with effusion. Then she turned to me with the same intention, but I was so surprised that I hung back, and it was some seconds before it dawned upon me that this must be Evangeline.

"I believe you don't know me!" she ejaculated; and I could see that this was a shock to her. Patches of red appeared on her somewhat sunken, sallow cheeks, and the look in her eyes quite startled me, it was so scared. She had evidently had no notion of the change in herself until I failed to recognise her, and had perhaps been cherishing the fond delusion that, however much others might alter, time had only touched her charms to round and ripen them. "I should have known you anywhere," she added reproachfully.

"And I you—by your voice." I blundered again, in my anxiety to be truthful as well as to atone. I felt angry with Adalesa. She should have prepared me. Changes, indeed! Evangeline was a wreck.

"I know I am looking washed out," she continued, glancing anxiously from one to the other of us. "The hot climate, you know. But one always recovers one's complexion at home."

The manner was much the same, at all events, showing that here again in her case the change had been incomplete, which was a pity; for the simplicity which had

been winsome at eighteen seemed silliness now, and the little *moues* and attitudes she still affected sat incongruously upon her altered looks. She was girlishly dressed, in a white frock and a large hat, much as she might have been when first we met. Her unconcealed sensitiveness about her appearance had made us all feel awkward for a moment; but Lady Marsh diverted the rest of the party by directing their attention to me.

"So now you write books?" she said, shaking her head involuntarily.

Miss Creamer Patterson changed countenance, and edged her chair away from me a little, and then edged it back again, as if, on second thoughts, she regretted the impulse. Old Lady Parkinson peered at me, with undisguised interest, through a single eyeglass. She was prepared to relish any impropriety there might be in my occupation.

"Do tell me how you do it," she said, in an undertone, looking about her mysteriously, and then leaning forward as if she were about to hear something one only mentions in a whisper. "I am curious to know how things are written. I've often thought I should like to do something of that kind myself—*on the sly, you know*. It must be so pleasant to write things. But," she added quickly, "I shouldn't like to do anything to interfere with my night's rest."

Miss Creamer Patterson, having overcome her first instinctive shrinking, and being kindly anxious to atone if she had hurt my feelings, now decided to countenance me, while, of course, carefully avoiding any allusion to my lapse.

"It has been a very *dull* day," she said.

But before I could do more than glance at her in response, Lady Parkinson began again.

"And when you write a book do you put in the stops yourself? Stops and everything! Oh, no! not the stops, of course! All that must be done for you."

This was added as if she feared I should think she had been expecting too much of me.

"It is really most enjoyable weather——" Miss Creamer Patterson recommenced.

"But, now, do tell me," Lady Parkinson interposed. "Do you *really* only write on one side of the paper? I've been told so, but one *never* knows. People spread such reports about, you know. Then, I suppose, you make your notes on the other side?"

"This is most enjoyable weather for the country," Miss Creamer Patterson again essayed, with exaggerated mildness—as an example, doubtless, to Lady Parkinson, who spoke out authoritatively; but the correction was lost upon the latter.

"You must write very legibly, of course," she broke in once more.

"They say I don't," I had time to reply. "But it doesn't much matter now, as we can have our things type-written."

"Ah! type-written," Lady Parkinson repeated knowingly. "I know what that is—that long, thin kind of writing. They put it on cards of invitation. But it must spoil your night's rest. *Surely* it does!"

"No," I answered; "I only write in the morning. Large entertainments do that when I go to them; but I

seldom go. People are never at their best in a crowd, and I like to see my friends at their best. Numbers take the individuality out of them, somehow; and the man or woman who is excellent good company by one's own fire-side, feet on fender, can only cackle in a crowd like everybody else. That which makes us kin only comes out at quiet times. When there is silence, we say an angel is passing."

She stared at me vacantly, as though not comprehending in the least, and then her eyes wandered over the floor as if she were looking for something.

"I should have thought it would interfere with your night's rest," she said at last. "And of course it must prevent your going into society as much as you ought."

"Society would interfere with my writing if I would let it," I answered. "But I never let it. I hate society."

She gave a sort of little jump. "Hate society!" she echoed under her breath. "Oh!"

If I had blasphemed she could not have been more horrified.

Mrs. Crowther and Evangeline were talking about some lady-milliner.

"I don't like lady-milliners, because you can't beat them down in their prices," Mrs. Crowther declared languidly.

"That is so like you, dear child," Lady Marsh ejaculated.

"What I object to about her is that she has taken to selling cheap things," Evangeline remarked. "She offered me a bonnet for two guineas the other day."

"Ridiculous!" said Mrs. Crowther.

Miss Creamer Patterson had had a little confidential chat with Evangeline since she last addressed me; and now she turned and beamed upon me cordially. "I hear you are a cousin by marriage of the dear duchess's," she said.

"I am distantly related to her husband," I answered stiffly, seeing that she meant to wait until I spoke.

"I hope you'll come and see me," she rejoined. "It has been nice bright weather to-day, hasn't it? But the country is always fresh, don't you think so? I was three months in London this year. I am going to give an at-home. I hope you will come. It is so nice to have interesting people at one's parties, you know. People always like to meet writers and that kind of thing, don't you know—when they are of good family. Of course that is the difficulty. But there *are* some undoubtedly—eccentric, don't you know; only that is amusing, and people like to meet them. Now, you will come, won't you? Do promise me."

On the way upstairs I asked Adalesa if she thought women were ready for the suffrage.

"Oh, I don't know," she answered carelessly. "Female fools are not worse than male fools; and if you tested the sexes for folly by examination you would find them much of a muchness. You can't make flour without corn, my dear. When people have nothing to think about they don't think."

XII.

IN going through the old house I became aware of a change in it also, as sorrowful in its way as that which I had observed in the old people. I remembered it as spacious above everything, a place where one's lungs rejoiced in pure air always, and body and soul could expand healthily and be at ease. It had been Sir Henry's house at that time; but as the years rolled on, that trick of not troubling had grown upon him; and he had retreated further into himself, and oftener into his library, leaving his wife and daughter to have their way, even to the blotting out of every sign of his own personality if they chose, so long as they never meddled with his own sanctum and private place of abode, the big library. There he and the things he loved grew old together in gentle fellowship, built up of interest and early association; and there he had preserved the space he had been born to move in, and kept the memory of his people and the traditions of his ancient house alive. I went to see him in the library next morning, and found him with a little book in his hand, looking idly out of one of the windows; and, coming upon him unawares, surprised a look of patient resignation on his face that saddened me. It was a grand old age, upright and uncomplaining, but terribly pathetic in its loneliness. Adalesa was the one creature upon earth, I believe, with whom his soul found fellowship, and she did what she could for him with joy, her great grief being that they could not meet except under the sombre shadow of an approaching parting: "If only you were a pauper,

Uncle Henry," she used to exclaim in her quaint way, "I could have you with me always."

Outside that room the house was crowded now to suffocation with curtains, cushions, couches, ottomans, and easy chairs, upholstered in the modern manner with mere trivialities of a costly fashion, devoid of association with the past, and not likely or even intended to last into any distant future. It was decorated, too, in excess with pictures, statues, china, arms and ornaments of every sort, stuck any- and everywhere till the eye was satiated; and it would have been a relief to it to have found a square yard of old oak panelling to repose upon, and a stimulant to the mind had there been any story connected with the panel to arouse reflection. It was a house furnished to death, to the great discomfort of people like myself, who crave for light to luxuriate in, air to breathe, and space in which to move freely. The excessive air of affluence out of doors had been bad enough in its suggestion of a little toy territory, but indoors it was worse, being oppressive. Every appointment was too luxurious, and it seemed impossible for human beings to live long in such surroundings and not become enervated, both from want of thought and in consequence of habitual self-indulgence. Lotus eaters they were bound to be, growing flabbier from day to day, morally and physically, through having had everything excluded from their lives that might have served to stimulate them to the wholesome exercise of their minds and muscles. It was impossible to think of such a place as belonging to a man, or at all events as the outcome of a vigorous character. Everything about it now was womanish, to such a degree as to create a prejudice in advance,

in the mind of one who likes men to be manly, against any man who lingered there. It seemed unlikely that he could be anything but of the tame cat kind, a domestic animal kept about the place by the ladies, like their other pets, for his usefulness, or to delight their eyes, and serve at odd times as an excuse for something to lavish their love upon.

Evangeline, being an only child and not very fond of the tropics, had naturally lived much of her married life at home. Our old schoolroom was now her boudoir. She had made it stuffily effeminate in the fashionable manner, with tambourines and ribbons, painted plaques, and things of all kinds converted from their honest use to serve as ornaments absurdly—as, for instance, a salad-oil bottle with a pink ribbon tied round its neck, filled with grasses and hung upon the wall—dusty fripperies! “Just like a beastly bazaar,” as Adalesa remarked. “Don’t I know them, for my sins? I’m always having to open them. And I always buy these kind of things, and then give a children’s party, so that some one may get some pleasure out of them, if it’s only the pleasure of demolishing them. I should so like to see Evangeline the Second throw billiard balls at that oil bottle.”

It was the day after our arrival, and we had looked in there for a moment on our way to the drawing-room for afternoon tea. This meal was quite a function when Adalesa was in the house. People dropped in for it from all parts of the county, and one could see that none of them ever forgot that she was a duchess.

We found the room full on this occasion, and Evangeline, very much in her element, flitting about from one

to another, all little airs and graces, gesticulating with her pretty hands to help her words out, and altogether very youthful indeed. Two lovely little children, a boy and a girl, dreadfully over-dressed, were brought in presently.

"My babies!" she exclaimed, fluttering off to meet them, and then flopping down on her knees and holding out her arms, into which the little girl sprang confidently. The boy hung back.

"Ah, this is *my* child, this is *my* darling!" Evangeline cried, covering the girl with kisses. "You go away," she said to the other; "you're not *my* boy at all."

If this were meant for playfulness the little fellow did not see it, for he shrank off sensitively, and seemed too preoccupied to respond when Adalesa took him upon her knee and began to lavish attentions upon him. He sat with his eyes fixed on his mother and sister, watching them with a countenance so blank, one wondered at it, but could not understand it. I discovered afterwards, however, that he was utterly neglected, if not absolutely ill-treated, by his mother, because a dark drop that there was in his father's family had come out in him. Evangeline had been sentimental, as a girl, on the subject of Perceval's "exquisite Oriental eyes," but during her sojourn in the tropics she had acquired some further information on the subject of such eyes, and now associated them with other than romantic ideas. The little girl was as fair as herself, but abroad the boy had been stigmatised as "coloured." He was a charming child, but almost morbidly sensitive, and one could see that his mother's continual jibes, although always delivered with an affecta-

tion of playfulness, never failed to cut him to the quick. Adalesa and I both begged hard to be allowed to keep him.

"You can halve him between you if you like," his mother rejoined. "I only want my girl—my beauty!"

"You *are* a brute, Evangeline!" was Adalesa's gentle comment.

"Ah, my dear," said Evangeline airily, "it is fortunate for the family that you became a duchess. In a less exalted position people might have tried you by your language, and found you wanting in refinement."

"Good, by way of *tu quoque*," said Adalesa appreciatively.

They had an encounter of this kind almost every time they met, and it was strange to find these two mature women jarring still, without ever quarrelling exactly, just as they used to do in their early girlhood.

XIII.

MRS. CROWTHER was Evangeline's bosom friend at this time; but they had two other bosom friends, Mr. Regy Vincent and Mr. Paul Marks, who came continually to the house to pay them that kind of court which very young men are apt to lavish on dressy young women, a good deal older than themselves, if they are encouraged; and it was evident to me, so far as Evangeline was concerned, that what she lived on now was the adoration of these

"Things whose place 'tis over ladies
To lean and flirt and stare and simper,
Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman;
Crucified 'twixt a smile and a whimper."

She took either or both about with her impartially, according to circumstances, or as they might become available for purposes of escort. She shared them fairly with Mrs. Crowther, but would show signs of dissatisfaction if they ventured to pay any but the most unavoidable attention to other ladies. Beyond these young men, however, and the constant care and thought she bestowed upon her dress and appearance, she did not seem to have any special interest in life. It was a continual case of "What shall we do next?" with her—an inveterate running from one trivial amusement to another in order to pass the time—to get it over with as little consciousness of its flight as possible. The only moments she really lived were those which brought her some petty personal social triumph, emphasised by a tribute of admiration or of envy, no matter which, since either proved that she was still a success.

"One would think it was something glorious you were hurrying to arrive at," Adalesa said to her one day, "instead of old age, which will be upon you soon enough, I should think, without going to meet it half-way as you do, seeing that you dread it so."

Mr. Regy Vincent and Mr. Paul Marks lounged in after dinner on the evening of our arrival. They were stiff and neglectful in their attentions to Lady Marsh on account of her age, familiar with Evangeline and Mrs. Crowther, deferential to "the duchess," and suspicious of me. Sir Henry they would have treated as an equal had he not overlooked them altogether.

"Awful fun at the cricket match this afternoon," Mr. Vincent remarked to the ceiling. He was sprawling in

an armchair beside Mrs. Crowther, with his hands in his trousers pockets and his legs spread out before him.

"Oh, did you hear that girl?" said Mr. Marks, who stood near with an eyeglass in his right eye, looking down on the ladies in every sense of the word. "I can't remember exactly what she said, but I know it was awfully good. Some one had been caught out, or something of that kind, don't you know, and so she thought that side had lost!"

"Yet women want the suffrage!" Mr. Vincent said softly to the ceiling.

Mr. Marks very much appreciated this good thing; and the three ladies also smiled, as though to show their perfect agreement with the conclusion that, because one woman, not having learnt the ins and out of such an important thing as a game of cricket, makes a mistake, therefore the pretensions of all women to be considered reasonable beings are absurd.

"Take care!" Lady Marsh said to Mr. Vincent playfully. "That dear child there"—meaning Adalesa—"claims equality with you."

"Oh, for heaven's sake—pardon me," Adalesa cried, with more than necessary emphasis, after a horrified glance at the young man's sloping skull—"not equality! I could never come to that!"

Mr. Vincent frowned thoughtfully, and even Mr. Marks seemed to think there might be more than he perceived in this reply; but Lady Marsh smiled on serenely. There was a little pause, however, and some remarks made in undertones before the chatter recommenced; then somebody began about hands and feet.

"I know who has the smallest feet I ever saw," Mr. Vincent declared, looking significantly at Evangeline, who assumed a simpering air of unconsciousness.

"Well, I know whose feet are the best shaped," Mr. Paul Marks declared, with a companion glance at Mrs. Crowther.

"I'll bet you ten to one Mrs. Perceval has the smallest foot in the room," Mr. Vincent cried.

"Done with you," said Mr. Marks. "Ladies, a slipper each, please, to measure."

"I beg to be excused," Adalesa said, with dignity.

"How horrid of you!" Evangeline exclaimed. "How is the bet to be decided? It is only fun."

"I fail to see the fun," said Adalesa.

Others were not so fastidious, however, and the vulgar competition went on without her, one inanity leading to another until it was time to retire.

"Isn't it delightful to see Evangeline so young and fresh?" Lady Marsh whispered to me as I wished her good-night. "She is quite a girl. Every little thing amuses her."

I smiled as well as I could, thinking the while that it might have been better had she been less "a girl" and more fastidious.

"Oh, by the way," Mr. Vincent exclaimed, "will you come out for a row to-morrow? We can carry four ladies in the back of the boat."

"Where?" I asked.

"Mr. Vincent means the stern," Adalesa explained; "but he didn't think a lady would understand."

We were leaving the room together at the moment;

and she continued laughingly, when we were out of ear-shot, "I always think it so kind and considerate of those dear boys to talk down to our ladylike level."

Adalesa laughed; then asked if I felt sleepy, because she did not, and proposed that we should go to Evangeline's room and cackle.

We surprised Evangeline dabbing some cosmetic on her faded cheeks.

"Don't you do anything to *your* face?" she asked Adalesa, in a sort of gently reproachful tone, as if it were not honourable to neglect cosmetics.

"I wash it," said Adalesa.

Evangeline had left her husband in Brazil, but he was expected home next day.

"How delighted you will be to see him!" I said innocently.

Evangeline failed in an attempt to look so.

"You haven't seen him since Evangeline took him off my hands for his good, have you?" Adalesa remarked, in her flippant way.

I had been nervously toying with some bottles on the dressing-table when she spoke, and now I knocked one over.

"My drops!" Evangeline exclaimed. "I am obliged to take something. The doctor prescribed them for my nerves: I can't trust my nerves; I can't keep up without something."

This was said almost defiantly, as if she thought we should object; but Adalesa recommended her to have some drops.

"Judging by your appearance, I should say you will

never want them more than you do at this moment," she said.

When I was alone with Adalesa, I could not help remarking on the change in Evangeline.

"It amazes me," I said.

"Do you mean the change in her appearance or in her character?" she asked. "Or the further development of her character rather, I should say, for essentially she is the same."

"Both," I answered.

"Well, neither need," she said; "for those soft, plump, pink-and-white girls, who mature early, and have no muscular training to strengthen and develop their physique, go off early as a rule; and if you will remember how she was taught to believe that a woman's great aim in life is to be attractive, particularly in appearance, to men, you won't wonder that she begins to be embittered by the suspicion that she is less so than she was."

"What is Perceval like now?"

"Stoutish—the last time I saw him; and I expect by now he will have quite lost his girlish figure. But in one respect he has not altered. He is still much as he was when he thought he preferred Evangeline to me—the sort of man, that is to say, who hasn't the brains to know what a fool he is."

XIV.

It was Adalesa, as it happened, who welcomed the traveller back next day, Evangeline having gone out early, with Mrs. Crowther and the two young men, on some ex-

pedition, from which she did not return in time to meet her husband.

He looked to me now a somewhat irritable, elderly, careworn man, more altered for the worse, I thought, in appearance and manner than she was even. But he won my heart by his devotion to his dark little boy. The way the two clung to each other was significant. When the father was reading his paper in the morning, the child would steal in stealthily, glancing about, as if afraid of being captured and ordered off, and would climb up on his father's knee, and nestle there happily so long as he was left in peace, his father fondling him half-unconsciously with his disengaged hand. And they would talk to each other, too, when nobody seemed to be noticing them; but if Evangeline came and caught them, she would gently insist upon sending the boy off to the nursery, or out for a walk, arranging and ordering for them according to her own mood of the moment, after her mother's manner; and neither he nor his father ever had the courage to disobey her.

These episodes were painfully significant. They made one heartsore and sorrowful, and all the more so because there was such a falsification in it all of the unvarying sweetness of manner and womanly graces Evangeline cultivated. She was enough to make one distrust all simple-seeming, apparently amiable women; and one felt one would rather have had downright roughness with some affection, than that silken selfishness which had spoilt the only chance a man ever had to become better than his natural self, was crushing his son, and bringing his daughter up to be detestable.

One of Evangeline's ideas was to have a ball while we were all together, "just like the one we had when we were girls," she said, clapping her hands youthfully. It did not seem to me to be a very happy idea, considering what Adalesa had suffered on that occasion; but the latter was too healthy minded, even if she had not been too happily situated, to be troubled by inconvenient reminiscences.

Lady Marsh aided and abetted Evangeline. We should arrange it all ourselves, she said, just as we did before, in the same sitting-room, and all be girls again. But, oh, the pathetic absurdity of the attempt! three married women at the meridian expected to ape themselves as they were in the morning of life. Only Evangeline could seriously think of such a thing. She insisted that our costumes for the ball should be red, white, and blue again; and that we should wear the jewels Sir Henry had given us for the first event; and she sorrowed because the very same dresses were not in existence to be worn again.

"What *should* we look like!" Adalesa exclaimed, with her frank laugh. She was sitting beside her uncle, and now proceeded to make merry with him over the disappearance of her angles, and the apparition of a wrinkle:—"I was so surprised when I first caught a glimpse of one at the corner of my eye," she said. "I thought there was something the matter with the glass. It had never occurred to me that *I* should become wrinkled."

Evangeline was shocked at such levity. She thought any allusion to altered looks very bad taste; and besides, she was treating the whole thing like a sacred function, which, if solemnly performed in the right spirit, would

rejuvenate us all. "You always had those wrinkles," she said severely. "It is the way you laugh. You pucker up your eyes."

One of Evangeline's wearing tricks was to exact a lover-like devotion from her husband; but only by fits and starts, when others failed or their attentions palled upon her, or when she suspected him of having looked admiringly at some one else. The poor man always did his best to respond to these exactions; but it was pitiful to witness what the effort cost him, and ridiculous to see him attach himself to her train, and feign again to be a passionate young lover. At such times he made me think of a performing dog in a state of trepidation, doing his best with one eye on his master's whip, in dread anticipation of what will follow if he fails to satisfy him.

I was standing beside her when the ball began.

"How delightful to renew all the old associations!" she exclaimed. "I feel quite as excited as I did—then, you know."

I could see, however, that it was an anxious kind of excitement, more painful than pleasurable. This ball was to be decisive in some way. She kept glancing at herself in a mirror near. She had always loved the good points of her own anatomy; it had been a positive pleasure to her to consider them; but now there was no pleasure in her eyes, only incessant inquiry.

"I think we look pretty much the same," she said at last, airily, but tentatively also.

"The same considerably older," I answered, but instantly regretted the careless speech when I saw its effect upon her. She was not so much offended as frightened,

I thought, and I was glad to see her husband approaching to make a diversion.

"We will have the first waltz together for old sake's sake," he began, with a kindly smile.

"I am engaged for it. You should have come sooner," she answered shortly.

"Well, never mind, dear," he rejoined. "Keep me one during the evening."

"If you really care about it, I think you might particularise the one," she answered.

He took her programme, and looked at it quietly; but there was no longer any of the animation in his face with which he had approached her. She had banished the light of other days effectually; and in its place there reappeared the lines which had been deeply graven there by the friction of such scenes as these.

Evangeline's partner carried her off, and then her husband turned to Adalesa, who was also standing by. I had noticed that it was always to her he turned in times of trial. "You see I never do the right thing," he said, dejectedly.

"I should have said that you did so just then," she answered.

"Ah! well, then," he rejoined, "I suppose I did not do it in the right way."

He sighed as he spoke, and at that moment Evangeline glided by with Mr. Vincent, to whom she whispered and simpered as they waltzed.

There was a bevy of girls at the ball, charming, fresh, merry girls, whom it was a pleasure just to sit and watch, their enjoyment of everything was so hearty. It was a

joy to us elder women to have them come and cosy up to us with frank, affectionate confidence, sure of our sympathy and discretion. There was a double delight in it for us, the pleasure of entering into all their feelings, and the hope of being able to help them to realize some of their anticipations.

Adalesa and I busied ourselves in finding partners for them. Evangeline had fought against having so many girls asked, but we ultimately overruled her objection. A ball without plenty of girls would be intolerable. In my leisure moments—that is, to say when a dance was in progress—I saw her several times sitting out; and towards the end of the evening an unmistakable air of deep dissatisfaction settled upon her. She had determined to dance till daylight, but only her husband, Mr. Vincent and Mr. Marks had asked her; by all the other men she had been overlooked.

Once during the night I saw her hurriedly leave the ball-room alone, and followed her, fearing she might be ill. I found her in her own room, having recourse to those fatal “drops,” without which she professed to be so seldom equal to anything now. They seemed to raise her spirits for the moment; but, later on, during a dance, she came to where Adalesa and I were sitting out together, and sank on to the ottoman beside us with such a weary, dejected air that I felt sorry for her, and tried to think of something to say that would solace her. The effort brought back a vivid recollection of the day that we were commemorating. I recognised the very spot where I had sat looking on at the ball and wondering at her conduct; and recalled with a rush the yearning to peep into the future

—and the palm. I looked across to the corner where it had stood, and there, by a natural coincidence, was again a palm. Probably one had been placed on that same spot for every ball given in the house. But this palm looked so exactly like the other, even to the position of that particular leaf on which the light had shone as it waved to the whirl of the dancers, or bent, in quiet moments, above those who sat under it, that it might have been the same plant, especially as time had touched it, so that the leaf was no longer fresh and green, but dry and brown, with frayed edges much in need of the gardener's shears.

I had confided my fancy of long ago about it to Adalese, and now she remarked upon it.

"Does it speak of spirits still?" she asked.

"Alas! no," I answered. "It has 'fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf' and is altogether prosaic. I should have it cut off; it only disfigures the plant."

Evangeline looked up at it absently; then suddenly her eyes gleamed.

"Do I look like a horrid, wizened old woman?" she demanded.

"No," I answered sincerely.

"And what would it matter if one did?" Adalese asked.

"What would it matter!" she groaned. "It would mean an end of everything that makes life endurable."

"Nonsense!" said Adalese. "Every age has its pleasures; and how a woman can care to be a day younger than she is—can crave for the admiration paid to twenty when she should be enjoying the homage due to forty, I cannot conceive. The buds are beautiful in the spring, and there

is beauty also in the full-blown foliage of summer; but are either more admirable in their day than the exquisite autumn leaf?"

"But men say such things about old women," Evangeline wailed.

"Ah—men!" Adalesa laughed. "Well, *my* man is sound on the subject. But why be for ever thinking about men, Evangeline? Why don't you go in for something sensible now? Look at Mrs. Crowther! It is for men, I suppose, that *she* makes up so abominably. And what does she gain by it? Nothing but ridicule; for if there is one thing men despise more than another, it is an artificial woman. Are you ill?"

This was said with concern, on seeing Evangeline's face contract, as if with a spasm of pain.

"No, thank you," she answered faintly. Then, after a little, she exclaimed, "But what is there to live for, if you cease to be attractive?"

"Oh, if we are careful, we need never cease to be attractive," Adalesa answered easily, and then abruptly changed the subject.

XV.

WHEN the guests had gone, and we had got into our dressing-gowns, Adalesa came to my room, and found me sitting by the open window looking out at the lingering night. She drew up a chair, and sat beside me silently for some time.

There was no moon, and only a few stars appeared low down on the horizon; but still it was possible to see the

shadowy outlines of trees and shrubs; and the scent of summer flowers was wafted up to us, the chirrup of a bird disturbed, the mournful cry of some creature far away—bird of night or beast in distress, it was impossible to say which at so great a distance—and even the round clear warble of a nightingale arose now and then, though it was late in the season for these; occasionally, too, one of the dogs would set up a dismal howl, which would arouse the others in the neighbourhood, one by one, till a whole pack had joined in vigorous chorus, which subsided again into single barks, as it had begun, making room for the silence proper to the hour—that silence, never empty or distasteful to the healthy mind, which is as an atmosphere wrapped about us, through which we are conscious of the throbbing of continuous soft sounds. There came to us now from far away the solemn, deep-toned tolling of a bell; while the constant gurgle and drip of water near at hand and the voices of whispering leaves filled up every pause with lingering *crescendo* murmur and rustle, inexpressibly soothing.

“What an exquisite hour!” Adalesa said at last softly; “a night like that other night long ago; but, oh, the difference! the like in unlikeness! I *did* suffer. And now I have everything—by which I mean that in myself which is everything; while Evangeline—I do pity her; and I am anxious about her too. I never dreamt any sane woman could be so seriously affected by the suspicion that she has gone off. She has everything in the world but the charm of youth and the tribute paid to it, and that, it seems, is the only thing she cares for.”

“Oh, well, it is natural to mourn when a sudden sense

of loss comes upon us," I answered temperately. "I don't believe, until to-night, she ever even suspected that she could go off. It must have been a blow to find herself set aside all at once. But let us hope she is sleeping now, and will awake with her mind strengthened."

"Yes, let us hope it," Adalesa answered. "Let us hope she will reconcile herself to the loss of her beauty, and begin to look about for more lasting interests. And let us slip out, you and I, just to mark the good time we are having, and the great change—let us slip out and sit on the shore, and watch the sun rise over the sea. Come and invoke 'tender morning visions of beauteous souls,' and be glad. You can be glad now?" she said, with sudden sympathy, recollecting.

"Oh yes," I answered quickly; "I enjoy every hour of my life now."

"That's right. That is how it should be as we get older," she replied. "Here, let me help you into a walking-dress. Don't you appreciate things better now than you did?—at the moment, I mean. When one is young, one is never so satisfied. One looks back and lives those delights over again; but at the time we did not understand, and so lost the full flavour. Later one has realised how precious it is just to be alive; and then, I think, it is that one begins to live."

We were ready by this time, and, having slipped out by a side-door, we took our way through the murmuring pine wood to the beach. It was so dusky under the trees that we could see no path; and now our feet sank deep in moss, and now dry branches crackled beneath them, making what seemed, by contrast, to be a terrific noise in

the stillness. In the thicker part of the wood great shadows rushed out upon and then engulfed us; and filmy forms that hovered above the path flitted aside to make way for us; while the pine-needles falling kept up a continuous patter, as of lively little feet; and the fragrant pine-plumes, answering to a touch, bent above us caressingly.

Presently, however, we raised our heads again out in the open. It was a very different scene. The breezy sandhills lay about us, desolate as deserted streets, which they somewhat resembled in their irregular outlines, by that light—streets that the dust of ages has settled upon, making mounds, beneath which all outward semblance of human habitation is blotted out. The coarse grass, through which the wind swished, and the heavy sand hindered our feet as we stumbled on; but presently we came out upon the beach, close beside the sea, for the tide was up. And there we sat us, and together saw the sapphire dark melt out of the sky, and the first faint grey streaks of dawn shoot up in the east, shaft-like, from horizon to zenith, then slowly take on a faint flush of pink, scarcely a shadow at first, but growing momentarily deeper, and spreading till the whole east shone crimson, and the sea responded to the glory of it. Then the rim of the sun arose from the waters, and the wavelets welcomed it with merry murmurs as they broke upon the sandy shore. We saw in silence, there being no word of human speech to express the emotions of such a moment. The sea-voice sang in our ears; we scented the exquisite iodine freshness of the air, the joy of nature filled and encompassed us. No hour of earthly triumph can exceed

in ecstasy the gladness of such a time. The holy calm of it settled upon us, and when at last we rose and returned arm in arm, our souls were satisfied, and our hearts were strengthened as by a solemn service.

XVI.

NEXT morning, at a late hour, I was dressing in a leisurely manner for a late breakfast; and as I dressed I sang to myself, until the saying "Sing before breakfast cry before night" flashed through my mind, bringing with it a hundred memories of happy mornings when the songs would out in spite of the saying. Now, however, somehow it silenced me, and I was just thinking, when without warning, Adalesa burst in upon me and stood on the threshold gasping, with scared, white face.

"Come!" she tried to articulate, but her voice failed her.

I understood, however, and followed her from the room without a word.

Outside in the corridor we encountered Sir Henry and Lady Marsh. He, with a blank, stunned look on his fine old countenance, was tenderly supporting her as he led her to her room. Poor old people, fast failing both of them,—it was a terrible sight. She was all dishevelled in appearance, as if she had rushed out from her bed, with white hair streaming, and the pleased, perpetual smile banished at last and for ever from her distorted features. When she saw us she sent up a shriek, like one distraught.

"What horror has happened?" I tried to say, but my voice was strangled in my throat.

Adalesa, clasping her hand round my arm, hurried me on to Evangeline's room. The door was open, and several servants, with awestruck countenances, stood outside craning their necks to peep in over each other's heads and satisfy their curiosity. As we approached they silently made way for us, and we entered. The blinds were up, and the summer sun exposed the scene, touching with tawdriness what the moon would have enriched, and making merely revolting that which night would have divested of all but romantic interest. Was it only a few hours since we had seen that same sun rise resplendent, and felt we could cling to every hour of life only to see and salute him again and again? We had flattered ourselves then that Evangeline was sleeping off her childish pique; and now, at the first glance, she seemed to be sleeping; but at the second we stood transfixed, seeing but not believing, knowing but not acknowledging.

There was a large luxurious couch near the window; and there, still in her ball dress and her jewels, lit by the full blaze of day, she lay prone, with eyes half-shut and lips drawn back in a dreadful grin. She had many more jewels on than she had worn at the ball the night before; and I was seized with the horrid suspicion that the ball dress had been kept on for effect, and the extra diamonds added to complete the picture. But oh! if she could have seen the effect! I wish—I wish I never had, for I cannot forget it. Patches of rouge stood out on her sallow, shrunken cheeks, making her whole face look like old ill-coloured wax, the rigidity being further emphasised by a

fly, which buzzed about, lighting now here, now there, with impunity. It was horrible not even to expect her to feel it, and flip it away.

Her husband stood beside her; looking down at her, but there was neither love nor grief in his face—only a kind of wonder mingled with repulsion. It is dreadful to see death and not weep; but all who stood by, her lovers and her friends, were dry-eyed; and the fact that there was not one tearful face to relieve the tension with a touch of pathos made the tragedy more hideous.

Mr. Regy Vincent outside said audibly to Mrs. Crowther: "She looks too horrid; you mustn't go in."

Could she have heard him, had she had imagination enough even to have anticipated such a thing, she might have been saved!

Suddenly a child set up a shrill cry. It was her little boy, who had slipped in unnoticed, and now clung, shrieking and terrified, to his father. A servant, shrinking from the task, hastily tore the coverlet from the bed; and, with lips compressed, as if nerving herself, covered the couch and its ghastly burden, and then, snatching up the child, hurriedly made her escape.

Outside, Mrs. Crowther was asking Mr. Vincent if there would be an inquest.

"Oh yes! and we shall be asked to give evidence," he answered.

"What—*me*?" she cried. "How horrid! I was never mixed up in anything so dreadful in my life. Can't I get away?"

"Well, *I'm* going," he rejoined; "I'll see you safely to town if you like."

Now that there was nothing to be seen but the dim suggestion of a figure beneath the coverlet, we were able to speak to each other.

Perceval was the first to find words.

"She seemed dreadfully depressed after the ball," he whispered. "I could not understand why exactly. She said several times she had nothing left to live for. Then she begged me to leave her for the night. She wanted to be alone. She said she thought she should sleep if I left her alone. So I went into the next room, and was soon asleep myself, never dreaming——"

He looked absently at a little bottle he held in his hand, and muttered something about a dangerous medicine.

Adalesa slipped her hand through my arm, and whispering "I want to speak to you," led me away to her room. "Look," she said, drawing a paper from her pocket when she had shut the door and looked round carefully to make sure that we were alone, "I found this, but no one else has seen it. It is not addressed to any one, and there is no signature, you see. What shall I do with it? She had it in her hand. I was the first to find her. I went in early, because I was anxious. I thought I could cheer her. She seemed to be holding it out to me, as I entered; and I took it, and kissed her, and asked her pardon if I had hurt her—before I saw. I ran in, you know, and flopped down on my knees beside her, giving myself no time either to see or think; so that it did not strike me as strange that she should be lying there in her ball dress and jewels, with the sun streaming in upon her. It was the cold of her cheek——"

She finished by crushing the crumpled sheet into my hand with a shudder; and I shuddered too, as I opened it. One does not shrink from anything that the honoured dead have touched; but this was different—this firmly written, cool, cynical, heartless expression of a selfish determination.

When I had read it I looked at Adalea, and made as if I would have torn it up.

"Yes, yes," she said eagerly; "or burn it—for the sake of an honoured name—for the old people—for the children's sake—burn it. No one need ever know. Thank Heaven we were here!"

Accordingly, a large and sorrowing circle of shocked and sympathetic friends were informed eventually by the verdict that the sad occurrence had been the result of misadventure, in the shape of an overdose of morphia "taken to relieve pain."

JANEY, A HUMBLE ADMINISTRATOR.

How it happened that Janey could ever have lived and not been in Dickens, I cannot imagine, unless it was that the master was cut off prematurely before he came to her. The nearest approach in his works to the type is "Miss Jenny Wren," the dolls' dressmaker; but that small creature was mainly fantastical, whereas our Janey could under no circumstances have been anything but dignified, so simple were her manners, so direct her speech, so great her intelligence, so clear her judgment, and so exemplary her patient fortitude under circumstances of peculiar trial. She was one of the best specimens I ever met of that highly complex creature, "a true gentlewoman"; a being compounded of courage and timidity, strength and weakness, sense, delicacy, refinement, penetration, taste, tact, and a few foibles—though the latter were not innate in Janey's case, I should say, but rather an accretion sown by circumstances, an outcome of the influence of such externals as of necessity surrounded her unusual position, and of the close contact with a number of very diverse people which it entailed.

But although I maintain that Janey was a gentlewoman, it would be misleading to call her a lady. Gentlewoman in our day is a title which must be won by esti-

mable qualities; a lady may be any kind of a character, the term merely referring to position and means—those fine feathers which cover many contemptible birds. Janey's position was low in the social scale—she had been a kitchen-maid; and her pedigree was certainly not exalted. It is, however, valuable in its significance to the student of human nature as showing from whence she possibly derived her own good qualities. Her father's family were mostly tenant farmers in a small way, or market gardeners, and had been so for generations, the girls having gone into service when they did not marry and were not wanted at home. On her mother's side she was the descendant of a respectable line of gentlemen's servants, a race whose daily bread depended upon their moral worth. Her grandmother had been a housekeeper, grandfather studgroom, great grandmother lady's-maid, great grandfather butler, and so on, all people on whose competence and honesty their employers had to rely for their comfort and safety in life. And it would appear as if her ancestors on that side had been a kind of imitative insect also, taking on the colour and characteristics of their surroundings, both of which had culminated in Janey to such perfection that, had she been placed early enough among the nobility and gentry to acquire for herself the one thing wanting to her, their trick of speech, she could not have been distinguished from one of that order. Her father and mother had both struck out in a new direction for themselves. The father had gone into the service of a railway company, which employed him to drive a lorry and deliver goods; while the mother had been a straw-plaiter by trade up to the time of her marriage, doing the work at home.

I made Janey's acquaintance through our good vicar, to whom I had applied for work to vary the stultifying monotony of my elegant leisure.

"What would you like to do?" he asked.

"Something for somebody," I answered.

"There is district visiting," he suggested dubiously.

"No, certainly not," I answered without hesitation.

"You must let me go where I am sure to be welcome?"

"As for instance?"

"Well, the sick poor, you know. There must surely be something to be done for them."

He considered a moment. "There is Janey," he began meditatively—"and indeed her whole family for the matter of that! The father is suffering from some brain disease, brought on by debauch; the mother is worn out by the reckless production of too large a family; and Janey herself is paralysed from the waist down. I shall pass them on my way back, and," he added in his slow way, "I was thinking of going in."

"Please decide to do so then, and take me with you," I exclaimed.

We stopped at a row of squalid cottages—not country cottages, but the dreary town variety, two-storied, ugly, dingy, depressing, swarming with human beings, the children overflowing into the street and crowding the curb, multitudinous, restless, and repulsive on the first glance in their dirt and movements as maggots on meat; but proving on closer inspection to be handsome, sturdy, and delicate of skin, the strong survivals of a race from which the weakly weeds were subtracted between the ages of one and eleven by the rough exigencies of their

existence, as the little headstones in the cemetery showed, only the hardier plants being left to flourish. In front of the cottages was a broad main thoroughfare, the houses on the opposite side being those of well-to-do artisans; at the back were the great iron works where hundreds of men toiled day and night, "six hours on and six hours off," incessantly. Eighteen big chimneys towered above Janey's tiny abode, monsters whose black breath begrimed the country for miles around, and compared with which the human being is as insignificant as the coral insect is to the atoll. There was a small pretence of garden ground in front of the cottages, tiny strips of clay beaten hard by the children's feet as a rule, and with scarcely a green blade growing in any of them. These were divided from each other and from the footpath by iron railings, and little gates upon which the children swung. The vicar stopped at one of these, and entering went up to the cottage door, which was ajar. This he pushed open, then knocked at the door of the front room on the ground floor.

"Please come in, sir," was the gentle response. "I know who it is by your step, sir. I knows 'em all now pretty nearly."

The vicar looked in. "How are you to-day, Janey?" I heard him say. "I have brought a lady to see you."

"Thank you kindly, sir," was the soft response, and then the vicar stood aside to let me pass.

On my right, behind the door as I entered, was a small iron bed, upon which a young girl lay on her back, with her head slightly raised. Her thick, short, dark hair was loose on the pillow. She looked at me gravely as I approached her, but a pleased expression came into her large

luminous eyes when we had shaken hands. There was a striking peculiarity about her eyes. The iris, which was the grey of chinchilla in colour, had an outer edge of black.

"Sit down, miss, please," she said. "Would you kindly give the young lady a chair, sir?"

"The young lady is a married lady," the vicar informed her, smiling, as he complied with her request.

Janey looked at me solemnly, as if she thought it a pity, or was making an effort to alter her first impression.

"Have you been ill long?" I asked, when the vicar had left us.

"Two years," she answered, raising her hands to catch hold of a round ruler-like stick which hung suspended above her by a rope from the ceiling, forming a handle within easy reach, by grasping which she was enabled to alter her position a little. "Me arms and 'ead is all I can move," she explained; "but it's a mercy I've got the use o' them."

She spoke in the mellow north-country manner, smoothing the rugged aspirates out as it were, so that in the softened effect of her phrases their absence did not strike unpleasantly.

The head of her bed just fitted into a space beside the window, and, her back being turned to the light, she had nothing to look at but the opposite wall, from which the dingy paper, unrelieved by any picture, was dropping. Fancy, for two years lying looking at that! was my mental ejaculation.

"I'm most tired o' countin' the squares on it," Janey

cheerfully observed, as if she had divined my thoughts when I turned round to look at it.

Her face contracted with pain after she had spoken, and she caught at her knee with one hand. "It's me legs," she explained; "they're all drowered up, and they do twitch. When I cam' out o' 'ospital the doctor 'e tol' mother to keep 'em stretched out an' not on no account to let 'em drower up; but mother she 'ad nobbut this little bed for me, an' it 'as to be too short because o' the door, which wouldn't open with it any longer, so they had to drower up. It was to be, you see."

"Why, you must be tall!" I exclaimed. "I thought you were quite a little body."

Janey smiled. "Eh, but I'm bigger nor you are, four inches, I should think."

This would make her between five feet eight and nine, and the bed could not have been more than five feet long.

"What did they do for you in the hospital?" I asked.

"Oh, they brought amany doctors to see me," she answered, "'an they put weights on me legs, to keep 'em straight. My! they did 'urt! But I was gettin' on well enough, until one night when there was a great storm, and me bed was under a window, an' it blowed in, an' I called an' called, but the nurses didn't come an' I couldn't move meself, nor not another in the ward could move me, for we was all on us 'elpless. An' the rain blew in on me all night, an' no nurse cam' till seven nex' mornin', an' then one come for something, an' I ses to 'er, 'O nurse, it's bin rainin' on me, an' I'm all cold an' wet.' 'You just wait till your betters 'as breakfasted,' she ses, an' off she goes,

an' it was 'alf past eight an' more before she comed to move me, an' me teeth chatterin' that 'ard you could 'ear 'em. An' one of the women in the ward, she said it was shameful neglec', an' she'd tell the doctor, an' the nurse said, threatenin' like, 'You'd better!' But she did, an' O my, 'e did go on at that nurse awful! He *was* vexed! An' she did treat that poor woman cruel afterwards. She'd do nothin' for 'er. I've 'eard 'er call an' call an' call, for she was 'elpless too, an' nurse 'ud come back an' look at 'er an' laugh, and she in that pain; an' the nurse would say, 'You'll tell tales o' me again, will you?' They isn't lady nurses they 'as 'ere, you know, m'am," Janey broke off to explain tolerantly. "They's just common ignorant servants, an' when they gets called nurse, an' the doctors speaks to 'em confidential like, it seems to turn their 'eads, an' they don't know 'ow nasty to be. There's gentlemen comes round every week to ask if we 'aven't no complaints, an' we said as we'd tell 'em, but we was timid of 'em; and there was one woman who'd bin there afore said it wasn't no use neither, because it 'ad bin done in 'er time, an' the patient wot complained got the wost of it, because the nurses all swore she was a untruthful, troublesome person, an' the other patients i' the ward was afraid to contradict 'em for fear they'd use 'em awful afterwards."

"And did it do you no harm, that wetting?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she answered in a casual way; "I had rheumatic fever an' inflammation of the lungs, an' it seemed as if there wasn't much to be done for me afterwards, for the doctor sent me 'ome, an' on'y tol' mother to keep me legs straight."

"And while you were so ill were the nurses good to you?"

"Well, you see," she answered temperately, "they 'adn't much to do for me, for mother she used to slip in reg'lar an' make me comfortable 'erself, an' the nurses they'd wink at 'er comin' cos it saved 'em a deal o' trouble."

This happened in the confident days of my youth, when I was still under the delusion that wrongs would be righted directly if those in authority were informed of the fact; and when I left Janey that afternoon I hastened to see an old lady whose husband was one of the gentlemen visitors to the hospital, and who was herself much interested in the institution. They were both by way of being kind and charitable, and were also people of position who could have instituted searching enquiries into the truth of Janey's statements, but to my consternation when I told her story, the old lady answered in a tone which showed that she resented my interference:—"Oh, these people are never satisfied! They are always complaining of something. You should know better than to listen to them. We both visit the hospital regularly and have never yet seen anything wrong."

As Janey finished speaking, the door behind me opened, and some one entered with a slouching step.

"It's on'y father," Janey explained.

I turned to speak to him, and he came up to me with an imbecile smile, holding out his hand.

"For shame, father!" Janey exclaimed as if she were chiding a child; "you did oughter know better nor to offer yer 'and to a lady. Touch yer 'ead now, an' be'ave, else go away."

Father went away.

"You must accuse 'im, m'am," Janey proceeded; "'e's got the softenin' of the brain, an' knows no more nor a child, an' 'e's very troublesome at times; it takes me all I can do to mind 'im. The neighbours says why don't we put 'im away,* but mother she say no, 'e 'ave bin a good 'usband to 'er, an' please God she'll do for 'im as long as she can do for 'im, us 'elpin' 'er, an' 'e'll not be put away afore 'e goes to 'is long 'ome. Ah!" she burst out on hearing the slouching steps returning, "would you now? You'll not come in an' sit down an' a lady 'ere, you know; you just go an' take a walk. See! there's the sun out. Make your bow an' be off wi' you, an' you shall 'ave summat good to eat."

Father raised the tips of his fingers to his forehead, and slouched off again obediently—out of the house this time, for I saw him pass the window with his eyes fixed on the distant prospect of that "summat good to eat," I judged by the idiotic smile which had remained on his lips since the bribe was held out to him. "Bless you, 'e knows ev'ry word I ses to 'im," Janey proudly declared, grasping the handle which hung from the ceiling and altering her position uneasily. "It's me legs again," she explained; "they do pain wi' them twitches. Look at 'em! I can do nothin' wi' 'em."

A series of jerks here under the bed-clothes testified to the troublesome twitches.

* The poor here never use the word asylum if they can help it; the insane are said to be "put away," like precious things, "to be taken care of."

"You can't control them, then?" I inquired.

"Oh, no, I can't do nothin' wi' 'em," she repeated. "I can't move 'em at all, I can't. It do seem wonderful, don't it, 'ow they can go o' themselves?"

Here her mother entered, a stout woman who would still have been comely but for the deep lines which the "reckless production" of her large family had worn upon her face, marking it with a permanent expression of exhaustion.

She apologised querulously for disturbing me, but would I "acscuse" her if she spoke to Janey, because "the baker 'ad come an' she didn't know about the bread, there bein' nobbut a 'eel left in the jar, them boys ate so much."

"Well, I got three yeste'day," Janey said, pulling a little purse out from under her pillow, "an' two to-day's as much as you can 'ave, let who will do wi'out." She handed her mother some coppers as she spoke, and the latter, after curtsying to me, meekly withdrew.

"There's a deal to think of i' a 'ouse like this," Janey remarked. "Father gets twelve shillin's a week from the club, an' the railway allows 'im another six, that's eighteen, and two o' the boys bring in four a week each, that's eight, an' eighteen—two eights six—twenty-six, an' eight for rent out o' that, and then there's clo's, not to mention boots, and the children do wear out amany, you'd be surprised, specially the boys. They're thro' 'em i' no time, an' repairs comes 'eavy. It takes *me* all my time lyin' 'ere to think an contrive for 'em, for mother she can't be axpected to do much. She gets the boys' breakfasts at five i' the mornin', an' keeps about

a bit, washin' up an' cleanin', an' doing odds an' ends, but by the time she's dressed me an' father, she's about done 'erself, an' 'as to lie down till tea, an' as to thinkin', it can't be axpected of 'er wi' father that 'elpless, an' that troublesome at times, an' all, you wouldn't believe! 'E won't stay in, an' 'e won't go out, nor do nothin', an' 'e can't talk much, you know, to tell you what's the matter. Are you going, m'am? Well, thank you kindly for the visit. An' p'raps you'll come again. I'd be glad to see you. There was amany comed at first, ladies an' all, but now I scarcely sees a one, an' it do seem to do a body good like, you know, to see company. You don't get tired o' your own folks, but you want a change. It's like breathin'; you go on doin' of it whatever the air is, but when the winder's bin shut a long time an' someone comes an' opens it, my!"—she drew a deep breath—"it's like new life, the freshness is."

After this first visit, I made it a rule to go and see Janey regularly every Monday afternoon, an arrangement of which she highly approved. "It gives you something to look forward to like," she said, by which ambiguous expression she meant humbly to allude to her own feelings in the matter. But, indeed, I very soon learnt to look forward myself to the time I should spend with Janey, listening to her simple talk, and taken out of my own narrow groove by the largeness of nature which found an interest and had some sympathy for every phase of human being. It was Janey who taught me to perceive that there is no distinction of great or small in the value of the details of such daily life as we discussed. The placing of the sons of a gentleman in professions may

seem at a glance to be a more important matter than the finding of work for such small fry as Janey's brothers; but as an evidence of human worth, when you come to compare the resources of the one with the poverty of the other, the position of the gentleman with that of the paralysed girl who, doubled up with pain on her short bed, thought and arranged and "fended" for her whole family, all the wonder and respect was for the latter, as it is for the skilful if less perfect work of a man as distinguished from the mechanical exactness produced without thought by machines.

My fellow sheep in society, all crowding one after the other to get through the fashionable gap of the moment together, would have stared as at an imbecility had they heard it asserted that mine was the petty existence with its dinners, dances, dresses, and all the stultifying round of accustomed inanities, and Janey's was the larger life; but that was the fact. Janey was the human being, purposeful and versatile; I was the society machine, doing just what was expected of me exactly as the other machines did, without happiness and without heart in it. I knew this from the difference between Janey's effect on me and that of the other machines. The latter had the power of expressing the correctest sentiments on all occasions, and I could reply in like manner, each being the better perhaps for the exercise of politeness, but neither touching the other because neither felt. Now with Janey it was just the opposite. Her powers of expression were chiefly facial: the look in her large grey eyes, the slight smile or compression of her lips, the nod of her wise head indicated depths of feeling not to be

plumbed ; and without words, solely by force of feeling, she made me recognise in her a very loving loyal friend, and one who more than any lived in my interests most sincerely. The story of my life from week to week was of vital importance to her. She drew forth by dint of sympathy confessions and confidences no other woman could have wrung from me, and on many a weary day, sitting beside her little bed, I have felt my sorely contracted heart expand, and the hard burden of my own coldness melt in the warmth that came glowing with the return of the power to care—to love.

I was also indebted to Janey for many a valuable hint on the management of my household. She had made the most of her time in service, and observed just where the mistress was in fault as well as the maids ; but she dealt impartially with both of us.

At first I used to shrink from telling her of walks and rides and drives, the contrast seemed so cruel ; but she was too finely tempered to think of that, and soon showed me that such small share in my advantages as the description of these could give her was an enlivening pleasure to her, not a source of envy and despair. We had many a merry laugh together in that close little room, carefully smothered though for fear of disturbing mother, who would be asleep in the room above ; and we had many long silences too, listening to the intermittent regularity of the weary steam-hammer, going in the great ironworks at the back—breaking out into heavy beats that made the cottage quiver, then pausing for an appreciable time, then on again, thump, thump, thump, incessantly day and night. Poor Janey ! “ Sometimes it seems to shake

me," she said, "an' when I sleep I feel it crushin' me 'ere an' crushin' me there, an' when I wake it goes on i' me 'ead till I long not to feel nothin' no more—if you know what I mean. I don't want to be dead, which 'ud be wicked; but I just do want not to 'ear or know. Then there's the men. They comes out from their work i' there 'eavy clogs, changin' shifts, six hours on an' six hours off, an' I do dread 'em comin', for the clatter's awful. But of course there must allus be somethin'," she concluded, "an' you 'ave your troubles too as keeps you wakin' o' a night as well as me"—and so she would return to my affairs.

I had made her a picture gallery, with colored prints from the Christmas papers, by this time, and kept her room sweet with flowers, both cut and growing. And I had also taught her how to crochet edging, and make warm woollen comforters on a frame, light work that could be done in a recumbent position, and afterwards sold. Being able to make a little money in this way was a great addition to Janey's happiness just then, for her brothers had got out of work, and the family were in poorer circumstances than ever. A few days before Christmas I happened to ask her what they were all going to have for their Christmas dinner.

She put her hand under her pillow where she kept the family purse, and answered cheerfully: "Oh, I'll just get mother to go out and buy some beef pieces to make a pud-din' for the childer. You don't know what beef pieces is? The bits, you know, the butcher trims off of joints. 'E sells 'em cheap at night, an' if you boil em long enough they're not too 'ard."

Neither Janey nor any of her family were beggars, and I had always felt great delicacy about offering them money; but when I went home that day it occurred to me that Santa Claus might send them a surprise at Christmas. So we got a big hamper, and filled it with Christmas fare—beef, mince-pies, a plum pudding, apples, nuts, toys for the children, a fowl for the invalids, fuel for cooking, butter, eggs, lard, and anything else we could think of; and after dark, on Christmas eve, two of the servants put it down at the door, knocked, and ran away.

I missed my regular day, and did not see Janey for some time after this, hoping that, when I did go, the hamper would be forgotten, and Janey would have excused my absence on the ground of the busy time I had had; but in this I was allowing little for Janey's discernment.

"It seems quite a long time since I saw you," I began.

"Yes," Janey answered, "but you needn't 'a' stayed away for fear we'd thank you too much for the 'amper. I know what it is meself. You feel awkward like when you've got to be thanked; an' I ses to mother, don't you go an' say too much now. Eh! it was a surprise! I just 'appened to be readin' a story in a paper that mornin', of 'ow some poor folks 'ad a big 'amper left at their door, an' I told it to mother while she was washin' me, an' mother she ses, 'Oh, yes! them things 'appens in books, but not in real life. It's easy enough to make things come right when a scratch o' the pen can do it.' But, 'owever, that very night I was lyin' 'ere i' the dark, to save candle, an' there cam' a big knock at the door that fairly made me jump, an' then I 'eard footsteps runnin' away, an' I calls

out to mother, 'Don't go, mother, it's a runaway.' But she went all the same, an' I 'eard 'er exclaim, an' then there was a draggin' of summat 'eavy about, an' mother she comes in, an' I could 'ear by 'er voice she was all of a trimble like, an' she ses to me solemn, 'Janey,' she ses, 'things do 'appen sometimes in real life like as if it was a book.' An' then! if I didn't know the moment she said it what she meant; but I couldn't say nawthin', I was so took to. Then mother, she got a light, an' she an' Walter, me eldest brother, brought in the 'amper for me to see it unpacked, an' all the other childer stood around, and Tommy 'e say, 'Suppose it's a 'oax?' An' Walter told 'im it would 'a' bin if 'e 'a' 'ad anything to do wi' it, an' punched 'is 'ead to make 'im shut up; an' then mother began, an' took the things out one after the other as solemn as could be all the time, though the children shouted, on'y when she cam' to the beef she weighed it i' 'er 'and like, an' ses: 'Sixteen pounds, I do believe!' An' then she puts 'er 'and into the 'amper again, an' there at the bottom was the firin' to cook it, an' at that she just throw'd 'er apron up over 'er face, an' sat 'erself down in that there chair, an' rocked 'erself to an' fro, an' 'ad a good cry, an' that relieved 'er. An' little Georgie 'e say: 'Oo's 'urt mother?' An' I ses: 'Ush, Georgie, no one's 'urt mother. Mother's on'y very glad, that's all.' An' it was queer to see the little chap stannin' lookin' at 'er puzzled like, you know. 'E don't cry when 'e's glad, 'e don't! An' eh! that beef, m'am! It was as sweet as a nut! an' that tender I could eat it i' spite o' me teeth."

She had lost almost all her teeth, a defect which did not disfigure her because she scarcely parted her lips when

she smiled. "But indeed I'm glad they're gone," she said to me, alluding to her teeth, "for they was nobbut a trouble while I 'ad any. They began to go while I was in service i' London, an' my missus, as was a very good livin' lady an' kind to us all, down to me as was nobbut scullery maid then, she 'eard I 'ad toothache, an' she ses she'd send me to a dentist place. It's a kind o' charity. You don't pay. I think young gents goes there to learn the dentistry business, an' my! they do torture you. I didn't know what it was, else I'd not 'ave gone, not was it ever so. 'Im as did my teeth used to get me 'ead fast in a chair, an' put a thing in me mouth to 'old it open, an' then 'e'd leave me like that, an' go an' laugh an' talk wi' the other young gents; an' when 'e 'urt me an' I'd make a noise, 'e used to say: 'Now jest you shut up. You know you're a pauper an' gets all this 'tendance for nothin', an' good dentistry too.' But it wasn't good dentistry," she added, "for it 'urt awful all the time, an' didn't last."

This casual glimpse of the price which the unfortunates who have to rely upon "charity" pay for the same is the kind of thing which makes one long to visit such "young gents" with a big stick while one's blood is boiling; but Janey was not by way of complaining. She held that to do and to suffer were an inevitable and necessary part of to be.

"Then," she continued, "I did for 'em in 'ospital meself, for they 'urt that bad I begged 'em to give me summat, an' they got me creosote, an' one of the nurses she tol' me, 'If you use that, you'll not 'ave a tooth left i' your 'ead. It'll destroy them all.' 'An', I ses, 'all the better.' An' sure enough it did destroy 'em all, aexpress,

but a stump or two, an' I wish they'd go as well, I do, for they're nowt but a bother." She smiled as she spoke, then pulled herself up a little by the rope hanging from the ceiling, and apologised for the vagaries of her legs, "which do jump so as never was to-day."

"How did your illness begin, Janey?" I asked.

"It was carryin' 'eavy weights before I'd done growing begun it," she answered. "Me aunt, me father's sister, was cook in a gentleman's 'ouse, an' when I was fifteen I was a big gell, and she ses, 'Send Janey to me an' I'll make 'er scullery maid, an' she'll get to be kitchen maid an' cook in time.' An' me aunt was that particular it seemed like as if I'd niver no rest, for when I wasn't workin' 'n the kitchen, she made me sit down to sewin', makin' me own things—an' eh! I did get together a good set out! But I 'ad to carry 'eavy saucepans of water an' things, an' likely strained meself even afore I got to be kitchen maid, an' after that the work was 'arder nor ever; but I sent mother 'ome a lot of money! Then I began to feel queer i' me legs, an' one day I jest flopped down on me knees an' couldn't get up again, an' me aunt was cross. She thought I was shammin'. But that passed off, on'y I went on gettin' weak an' feelin' bad i' me back, till at last you could see as I couldn't drag on any more, an' I ses, 'Oh, aunt, you'll not scold, for I can't; I tol' you I'd go on till I dropped, an' I 'ave.' Then she spake to missus to send me 'ome for a rest: an' while I was at 'ome me legs lost all power on a suddent, an' that time it didn't come back, an' then mother took me to a 'ospital, an' the very first question the doctor ast me was 'ad I 'ad a fall. An' at first I ses no, an' then it come back to me all of a

'eap. I was 'urrying down stairs one day afraid aunt 'ud scold me for bein' late an' lazy, an' I slipped an' fell on me back; an' when I came to think on it as sure as enny-think it was from that time I felt the pain."

Armed with these details, I went to consult a specialist about Janey, in the forlorn hope that there might still be something to be done for her. He said, so far as he could form an opinion without seeing her, he should be inclined to suppose that it was a case of hysterical paralysis, a thing which might have been cured if properly treated in time. But he shook his head and was doubtful now when he heard about her legs being drawn up to her. The thing, however, was to arouse in her a strong desire to recover. Singularly enough I had never heard her express any wish on the subject. She had evidently been a "show case" in the hospital, a subject of peculiar interest to the medical men which led to her being made much of; and when first she returned home after she was stricken hopelessly, as it was supposed, numbers of people had come to see her, more out of curiosity than kindness—the sort of people who are collected by the excitement of a great calamity, but disappear when its effect upon themselves wears off. Janey, however, had enjoyed her little notoriety, and the being "fussed up," too much at the time to suffer acutely from fear of the dreadful future before her. As the days wore on, however, and there was no change in her to keep the first flash of interest alive in her visitors, their visits became fewer and fewer, until at last the good vicar, his wife, the scripture reader and myself were all who ever came to vary the monotony of the long dull days. *A propos* of this falling off of her friends Janey gave me a bright

instance of her patient moderation. I had been feeling indignant with those people who had only paid Janey attention while they could make capital of her case from which to draw large interest for their conversation; and I was especially angry with one lady who accepted credit for her supposed devotion to the poor girl while all the time neglecting to visit her.

"She has not been to see you yet, then?" I happened to remark one day, involuntarily implying a reproach, I am afraid.

"Ah, well, you see," said Janey tolerantly, "she 'as amany things to do, an' must find it 'ard to remember 'em all. When she ses she'll come she means to right enough; but one thing crowds another out o' 'er mind, an' that's 'ow it 'appens she forgets me."

Shakespeare puts it more concisely:

"What we do determine oft we break;
Purpose is but the slave to memory."

But Janey's kindly wisdom only differed from his in the expression of it.

"Do you like being read to, Janey?" I asked, soon after our acquaintance began.

"Yes," she answered, not very enthusiastically. "Scripter reader and the vicar they comes an' reads."

"What do they read to you?"

"The Bible, as is what they're paid to do, you know," she answered, with a fine appreciation of the obligation entailed to honestly earn one's wages. "An' Miss Hawke, she used to read to me about the martyrs till I got the 'orrors thinkin' of 'em. Mrs. Miller used to read too,

an' Mrs. Frier, about this miserable world an' all people 'as to bear, till I was that low sperrited I used to lie 'ere an' cry to meself alone. An' they used to read about 'eaven too, an' ow' 'appy we should be to think o' goin' there, an' 'ow all this affliction was sent to try us. I used to be thinkin' too much about gettin' well at first, but Mrs. Frier she tol' me that wasn't right, that we should bear what the Lord sends us wi'out repining, an' be thankful when 'e doesn't make it no 'arder for enny on us nor 'e 'as for me, black sinner as I am."

"Then Mrs. Frier told you all wrong," I answered boldly. "That is a demon she worships, a frightful spirit who wantonly tortures us." Janey look startled. "Does a father afflict his children?" I asked her. She shook her head dubiously. "He may chide and punish, but he doesn't injure them," I pursued—"and you *are* to think of getting well."

After that I began to read her cheerful secular stories to fill her with a wholesome love of life, and carefully avoided all those goody-goody productions which, by preaching a stultifying resignation, would naturally tend to confirm her in her hopeless condition.

After Christmas the circumstances of the family had greatly improved, thanks to Janey, who had worked wonders from her sick bed, having, by dint of boldly sending for people to beg their help, and writing curiously spelt missives in her queer unpractised hand, succeeded in placing three of her brothers and a sister in situations—one brother as grocer's assistant, another in a printing office, the third in the "works," and her sister in service; and as all four children, according to the custom of the

county, contributed to the support of "the home," the pinch of poverty was no longer felt there. Janey herself too, not content with "minding father," ordering his goings out and his comings in, his food and clothing, administering the funds of the family to the best advantage for everybody, and managing the household generally, had taken the child of a girl in the neighbourhood who had "'appened a misfortune"—to use her own quaint euphemism—"to tend," by which she made a few more shillings a week herself. The child, a little girl, required a good deal of "tending," being about a year old, very sturdy, and just able to toddle; but Janey, lying on her back in bed, only just able to move her arms, did wonders with her, keeping her amused from the time she woke till she fell asleep again, simply by talking to her, and "all the while 'aving an eye to father," who was apt to be troublesome if Janey's vigilance relaxed. She had a long stick with a handle now, a most useful instrument with which she could reach to any part of the room, using it like a shepherd's crook, opening and shutting the door with it, pulling the baby back to her bedside by her waist-belt when she crept out of reach, and administering condign punishment to father if she caught him "at his tricks," to which, after the arrival of the baby, he had added breaking her playthings, stealing her sweets, and slyly pinching her.

"Poor father!" Janey exclaimed tenderly. "When mother goes out an' leaves 'im for me to tend, it do seem as if 'e knew I was 'elpless, 'e do be'ave that bad. An' 'e can't abide the baby. 'E's kind of jealous of 'er, I think, an' would do 'er a mischief if it wasn't for the stick. I

catches 'im glowerin' at 'er, but if 'e sees I sees 'im 'e pretends it's summat else 'e's lookin' at, for e's that cunning—you wouldn't believe! But I jest shakes the stick at 'im, an' ses: 'Ugh! you would, would you?' an' e's as meek as Mary 'ad a little lamb."

Now that they were more comfortably off, Janey decided at my instigation to move to a better house, where there would be room for her to have a full-sized bed and more accommodation generally, besides the relief of quiet after the thud of the steam hammer and roar of the big ironworks at the back, and the heavy patter of clogged feet on the petrified pats of butter of which the pavement in front appeared to be composed. The mother, helpless, querulous, fatalistic, and a chronic sufferer from extreme debility, had no energy for the move. It would upset Janey, she was sure, and disagree with father, and so on; but I overcame her opposition by showing her that she had already been to blame for allowing Janey's legs to contract so much, and it was her duty now to put herself out to any extent necessary for Janey's good. The latter was nervous herself about being moved. She had not been out of her little room for three years, and the thought of being carried through the streets "an' seein' 'em all again" excited her so much that she was prostrated for days before the event. When the ordeal was over, however, and she found herself in a, comparatively speaking, large bright room, newly papered, with plants growing in a box outside the window, pictures in frames on the walls, a big armchair for father, a delightful spring bed for herself, and a cot for baby, she said she felt as if she could sit up!

"Of course you will sit up," I answered. "It is only a matter of time."

I had been telling her this, and trying to rouse her out of the depressing state of resignation I had found her preached into, ever since I had consulted the specialist on her account. After I had spoken she looked at me in a shy timorous way, as if she wanted to say something, but did not like to, and she had a cheap-looking publication in her hand which she was fingering nervously.

"What is it, Janey?" I asked. "You must tell me."

She bent her head towards me, and spoke in a mysterious whisper.

"Do you believe in faith-healing?" she asked, and then she held out the penny publication.

There was a good deal in the papers just then about faith-healing *à propos* of the "miraculous cures" brought about by pilgrimages to Lourdes and elsewhere, and knowing that marvellous results really had followed the effects of excitement and "faith" in the minds of hysterical patients, I saw a possible chance for Janey, and answered without hesitation, "Yes, I do."

One of her brothers had brought in a paper on the subject published by a society then practising faith-healing in London. Many most interesting accounts were given of cures effected at prayer meetings, and on what would otherwise have been the patient's death-bed. The reports were worked up with much detail, which made them exciting reading for one in Janey's condition, and I could feel that she was watching me with great anxiety and trepidation as I perused them.

"Do you believe it?" she asked again eagerly.

"I believe you are just one of the best cases to try it on. I think you could be greatly benefited by this kind of thing," I answered. "I will write them an account of your trouble, if you like, and ask them what they would recommend."

Janey pulled herself half up by her rope hanging from the ceiling, then let herself drop on her pillow again, not knowing how to contain her eagerness and anxiety.

My letter was addressed to a lady who seemed to be one of the leaders of the faith-healing movement, and by return of post I received a gentle, courteous reply, the sum and substance of which was: "Is not this dear child committed to your care? Read——" then followed a list of texts, which, I regret to say, I have lost and forgotten. I had boldly suggested that the faith-healers should come and cure my Janey if they could, but they preferred to let me have the credit of curing her myself, it seemed—also if possible, I suppose. But, allowing that "this dear child" was committed to my care, how much should I be justified in doing to enable her to apply her strength of mind to the healing of her body? I knew well what extraordinary results have been brought about by the influence of mind on matter, and also knew with what child-like confidence she would carry out any suggestion I might make; would it be right to try? But how could it be otherwise? I did think of consulting some one wiser than myself, but then I was afraid of being discouraged, and I knew the experiment could only be well made by one without doubt and all enthusiasm.

I took the whole week to screw up my courage, I confess, but when my next day came for visiting Janey I went

in bravely and told her I could help her to cure herself, explaining that I was not able to do it by the means which the society employed, but that I had a method of my own which was just as effectual. I told her also that I should require a piano to help me, and would send one during the week, and recommended her to begin at once to believe firmly that she was going to be cured.

Janey heard me with reverent attention, and when I left her there was a glow in her grey eyes and an expression of exaltation on her face that frightened me. Suppose I made bad worse? The thought was alarming; but I felt I must go on now and do something, otherwise I should be running the risk of making bad worse in another way, by inflicting a dreadful disappointment on Janey, and robbing her through myself of her faith in her fellow-creatures.

We had decided, between ourselves, not to mention the experiment to any one until we had tried it. Janey agreed with me that the attempt would create a disturbing amount of interest among her people, and I was afraid of the criticism, not to mention the ridicule of my own.

Janey was delicately emotional, I knew, for I had read her Tennyson and Longfellow, and seen her transparent skin suffused with pale pink flushes of pure pleasure when I came to the passages that specially appealed to her. She would repeat such words as :

“ . . . the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the roses blown,”

lovingly; and mount to an evident devotional enthusiasm on lines like :

"Ah, Lover! Brother! Guide! Lamp of the Law!
I take my refuge in thy name and thee!
I take my refuge in thy Law of Good!
I take my refuge in thy Order! Om!
The dew is on the lotus!—Rise, Great Sun!
And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave.
Om mani padmi hum, the Sunrise comes!
The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea."

And it had occurred to me that if words whose meanings she could only gather approximately had power to move her deeply chiefly by the rhythm and sound of them, then music must certainly be a most effectual adjunct to any attempt to work upon her will pleasantly through her emotions; and therefore the piano.

I found her on the eventful day in a state of quiet exaltation, which contrasted favourably with the inward trepidation from which I was suffering. She was full of confidence—faith, she called it. Father and the baby had been sent out for the afternoon, that there might be no interruption. The piano had been placed by her direction so that she might see my fingers as I played, and I found she had put her best dressing-jacket on, and had herself and the room smartened up to the utmost extent, as for a festive occasion.

I dared not hesitate, so I began at once—feeling all the time as if I were doing a deed of darkness—practising a black forbidden art.

"You know what faith is, Janey?" I said solemnly. "You must believe that there is a great power which can and will cure you, and that presently you will be able to sit up again. You must rest on that

thought, as it were, and let it make you feel happy and strong."

Janey grasped the handles of the rope suspended above her with both hands, and drew a deep breath. "Will it come all of a sudden?" she whispered.

"I cannot tell," I replied. "But don't look about the room. Watch my fingers as I play; listen to the music; and, above everything, *feel it*. Open your heart to it as to a great joy; let it tingle through you; and be sure that it will bring new life to you."

I had begun to believe in it myself by this time, and sat down to the piano in nearly as great a state of exaltation as Janey was, fortunately, for otherwise I should have been nervous; but as it was I could play—better than my best, I fancied. I chose the music which "speaks to the heart alone," and was conscious at first of how it was affecting Janey; but presently I forgot her, and, drifting off to measures that affect the imagination, I became absorbed. The world without passed from my comprehension. There was an interval filled with sensations of sound alone, then the faculty by the aid of which we walk in dreams awoke, uncertainly at first, scenes appearing as on a misty morning, blurred into vagueness. This, however, was but a borderland of shadows, which, rapidly stirring, left me wrapped in the contemplation of a great procession which was passing slowly between high houses down a narrow street. The houses were yellow stone, and above them there was a slender strip of sky, intensely blue, with one great white dazzling mass of sun-bright cloud upon it. It was a procession of women in flowing robes of exquisite amethyst tints. They walk in

step, carrying harps, on which they played an accompaniment while they sang:—"To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!" And so singing they came to the end of the long street of flat-roofed Oriental houses with tiny casements, and passed out into the open desert, where the heat radiated upwards from the yellow sand. And here they separated as water separates, spreading widely when it emerges from a narrow channel into an open space, but still flowing on in one direction; so they separated, each reclining on the invisible air, as it seemed, and floating off apart. Their dresses flashed like gems in the sunshine. Their hair shone. Their harps resounded to the touch of their milk-white hands, and their clear rich voices rang out always triumphantly:—"To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!" And so singing they passed on over the desert into the west, their voices falling fainter and fainter, their forms growing more shadowy and indistinct, till the one was invisible and the other had died away.

But where was Janey? My conscience smote me for having left her alone, for I knew that she could not go unguided into the wonderful land of light which music made me free of; and as I struck the last soft quivering chord *arpeggio*, I turned to look at her.

She was sitting up.

And from that day too she continued to sit up—in bed at first, but by degrees she became strong enough to be moved into a chair, and dressed. Then she got so far as to be able to get out of bed, dress herself, and hobble about the room; and I have no doubt that, but for her mother's fatal apathy in letting her legs contract, she would

eventually have quite recovered. There was no stretching those stiff, shortened tendons back to their normal length, however, and poor Janey remained a cripple; but happily a very active one.

We got her a bath chair next, and her brothers by turns wheeled her out every day. The first visit she paid was to me. I had often described our house to her, and the rooms and furniture, and when she arrived she was wheeled into all the ones on the ground floor, and was loud in the expression of her amazement because she said she hadn't imagined it at all like that.

But all this time father was getting more troublesome, and was "that cunning it did seem sometimes as if 'e would 'ave to be put away." I had had a little window-garden made outside Janey's window and filled with flowers, of which she took the greatest care; but one evening, when she went as usual to trim and water them, she found they had all been pulled up by the roots, and strewn on the ground outside. I thought the rough hands from the ironworks had done it; they used to destroy our grounds when they could effect an entry; but Janey said "no," with a wise shake of her head. "Hawks dinna peck out hawks' een. The men 'll not touch our flowers now Sammy's at the works. It's father; I know it's father. 'E throwed a plate at baby yesterday, 'e's that jealous or summat o' the child; an' 'e doesn't know what mischief to be up to next. But then, it's father, you know, an' if it wasn't that it 'ud be summat else."

I had risen to take my leave, and she looked up at me with her peculiar little smile that scarcely disturbed a feature, and held my hand a moment affectionately. A

tinge of colour had come to her delicate cheeks since she was able to go out into the fresh air, and her large grey eyes were brighter. It was a most interesting face, melancholy in repose, but beaming with good feeling and clear intelligence.

"Good-bye, Janey," I said, "until next Monday, unless you can come to see me."

"Good-bye, m'am," she answered, "an' thank you kindly. If the boys are either of 'em back i' time to take me I'd like to go; but I'm afraid this week"—she heaved a little sigh, then added in her usual cheerful way—"But of course if it is to be it will be."

The following Monday I laid up a life-long regret for myself by going to see Janey much later than I had ever done before. A game of tennis was the important matter that detained me!

The cottage door stood ajar, as it always did on my visiting day, so that I might walk in without disturbing the siesta of mother upstairs by knocking. The first thing I saw on entering Janey's room was father sitting comfortably by the window in his big armchair. He greeted me with a cunning grin. Janey was prostrate on the floor, and the baby girl was sitting beside her patting her cheek. I thought it was a game at first, but Janey turned a ghastly face to me when she heard my step, and moaned. There was a horrid wound on the side of her head, and there was a heavy wooden stool lying near her with blood upon it. I called through the open window to a man who was passing. He helped me to lift Janey on to her bed, and then hurried off for a doctor, father looking on mean while with a self-satisfied smirk, and every now

and then chuckling to himself as if hugely delighted with something. Janey held my hand convulsively. She was sensible, and looked up at me with a piteous expression in her beautiful eyes. "I don't know as 'e 'adn't better 'a' bin put away," she whispered, "for where mother an' the childer will be if ennything 'appens to me, I can't imagine." She stopped, closed her eyes for a little, then looked up again. "It seemed to come over 'im all of a minute," she said—"just afore you came. I was sittin' on the floor playin' wi' baby, an' 'e jest took up the stool, an' throwed it at me, grinnin' all the time. Oh! you bad man! see what you've done! Eh! but it 'urts, me 'ead does. I misdoubt me I'll never think for 'em all no more." Two great tears ran down her cheeks as she spoke. The blow would not have killed a robust person, but Janey had no recuperative power in her fragile body, and never rallied from the shock to her system. Dear, good, gentle loving creature! She managed "to think for 'em all" a few days longer, arranging, directing, advising to the last. She had been silent some hours before the end, and we who were sitting beside her thought we should never hear her low sweet voice again making the harsh words musical by smoothing out the rugged aspirates—when suddenly she began to murmur something about Georgie, her youngest brother, a very delicate child:—"Watch when 'e's white," she said, "an' never you mind no schoolmasters nor magistrates. Jest you keep 'im at 'ome. 'E'll niver do no 'ard work, but if you take care of 'im 'e'll be good for a light business—stationery and books——"

She broke off, and looked at the piano. I had de-

scribed that vision of the singing women to her, and told her how to interpret it, and we had summoned them since more than once for our encouragement, so that I knew what she meant when she said in a stronger voice, with a last little smile: "Would you play it again—very soft like—while I watch your fingers—an' may be they'll come and 'elp me—'elp me up—this last little bit o' the way."

I sat down to summon the singing women, and presently we heard their song—"To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!"—and down the narrow street of the Oriental city they swept in their gem-tinted garments, and floated out into the desert, and on towards the sunset. But before they faded quite from sight and hearing, some one touched me lightly on the shoulder. The look of pain had passed from Janey's face, a tender smile lingered about her lips, and it was plain that "they" had lovingly helped her gentle spirit up—that last little bit of the way.

BOOMELLEN.

"Son of a sad dog in his day, sir."

SUNSHINE and soft airs, scent of flowers and twitter of birds, all summer signs recall Boomellen. Where bright seas were, or burnished trout streams, or murmurous waterfalls sparkled in the heat, there was he likely to be seen loitering. Where he hid himself in murky weather it would be hard to say, but certain it is that none of us can recollect an occasion of the kind upon which he ever appeared among us.

But although associated in one's mind with warmth, brightness, and the music of moving water, he was not an ethereal being in point of appearance, such as would suggest, according to all ideal notions on the subject, a kinship with the kindly elements, a member of the family of Undine; but a big, broad-shouldered, substantial fellow, six feet high, and of a remarkably healthy aspect; with a delicate skin that never flushed but was always pinky like that of a sleeping girl, a splendid head, thick, glossy, light brown curling hair, worn rather long and never parted, small ears, and features delicate and handsome, but of a strange immobility. The impression left by his face was always as if its impassive calm had never been ruffled by any passion of earth. No other

human countenance has ever produced the same effect upon me, but while standing before the great bronze Buddha, Dai-butsu, as he sits, the image of contemplative calm, the passionless perfection of repose, among the trees of his grove of Karmakura, in Japan, the peculiar sensation recurred, and instantly I thought of Boomellen. But Dai-butsu felt further away than Boomellen did—he was not of the earth, while on the contrary there seemed to be something of the great spirit which pervades all inanimate nature in Boomellen, uniting him closer to that portion of it which neither wakes nor sleeps, nor thinks nor feels nor knows, but just lives and dies, than the human race. When he spoke his lips and eyes moved of necessity, but this did not disturb the character of that imperious mask, his face, any more than the waving of branches and rustle of leaves produces an impression as of sentient being in a tree. What was behind that mask? The question was inevitable, for his countenance was one which excited interest and expectation, and you waited anxiously when you met him first to hear him speak. With such a head, it seemed impossible that he should not be something distinguished, or on the way, well dowered with capacity, to become so. But expectation and interest invariably went dissatisfied away, either thwarted by silence or puzzled by insignificant words. Still he always looked as if he had so much in him that no one was ever quite convinced to the contrary, perhaps because his habit was to meet any attempt to draw him out with an impressive stare, as if, although his eyes were fixed upon you, his thoughts were concentrated on something worthier of his attention, which was disconcerting.

His father's estates lay in the wild west country, running down to the rocky rugged coast, and back among the purple mountains; and it was natural to suppose that, having been born and bred upon the spot, he would have in himself an innate appreciation of the grandeur of the scenery, and a cultivated eye for the shades and colours of changeful cloud-forms, and the vast varieties of grand Atlantic seas.

The first time we saw him, I remember, we were sitting with windows wide open, looking out upon a bay into which at the moment mighty waves were rolling under a summer sun up to the beetling grey-black cliffs against which they burst with a roar like muffled thunder, casting great showers of spray upward into the air, high enough at times to sprinkle the short grass and sea-pinks which grew on the brink. Every now and then a broad-winged sea-bird would hover above the boiling cauldron, look down into the turmoil intently for a little, and then sail on with scarcely any perceptible effort, having added a curious touch of life and intelligence to the scene, a sensation in our minds, as it were, containing the involuntary comparison of the superiority of one little atom of life to all that rude irresponsible force.

Boomellen looked out with the rest of us, his big brown eyes distended, his whole face full of a dreamy intensity.

"This is a wonderful country of yours!" one of us exclaimed enthusiastically. "Is it possible to live here, and not be a painter, or a poet, or inspired in some one way to reproduce and perpetuate such beautiful wonders of sublimity and power? You must love the place."

Boomellen turned his wistful eyes from the scene, and gazed at the speaker.

"Yes," he said, slowly, after some seconds, "we like the place."

"Only like it! Why I never saw anything so glorious as this view! Don't you think so yourself, although you are accustomed to it?"

"Yes," Boomellen repeated in measured accents, monotonously, and without the slightest show of animation; "yes, it's a nice view." Then, seeming to see that something else was expected of him, he added: "There won't be any porpoises to-day, but sometimes they come when the tide is rising."

Soon after making this last remark he rose abruptly, shook hands with us all, and withdrew, without having uttered another word. But when he had gone, and we tried to sum him up, some one said something about his "cheerful silence," and remarked that it was companionable as that of the dumb dog who looks up lovingly into your eyes.

Boomellen was of ancient and aristocratic lineage. His descent could be traced back clearly, both on his father's and mother's side, further than anybody cared to follow it.

"Eh! that's so, yer honour," an old woman on the estate, who had been descanting about the family to my father one day, informed him: "They was kings in these parts, shure enough, wonst, though now his own father's nuthin' but a common Justice of the Peace, 'deed an' he isn't. But phat cou' yer honour expect? It's the oulder the seed the warse the crop, it is, och! yes."

Boomellen had arrived at the weary end of his ancestry, being the last male representative and heir of two used-up races. His father had been "wild" in his youth, but his degrading habits were cut short by something which suspiciously resembled epilepsy. He then married, at the instigation of his spiritual director—the girl he chose being herself the daughter of a drunken father and an arrogant, nervous, irritable, self-indulgent mother. The consequences of this combination in Boomellen's mother were markedly neurotic, her symptoms appearing in the form of an exaggerated piety. She would at any time (an she could) have upset the order of the universe had she found that it was going to check her indulgence in the religious exercises which were her favourite pastime. She had been brought up in a convent, and indifferently educated, her reasoning faculty not having been at all developed, while the emotional tendency which naturally threatened the balance of her intellect had been incessantly worked upon. In the convent she was described as of exalted piety, in the consulting-room her diathesis would have been pronounced hysterical. Training and habit had also confirmed in her a predisposition to unquestioning obedience to the priest. The latter had taught her that it is good to save souls, that the soul of a reprobate may be saved by marrying him, therefore it is good to marry a reprobate, and she had accepted Boomellen's father upon this conviction, remaining as blind as her short-sighted director himself to the conclusion that by doing so she was lending herself to the manufacture of more reprobates, descendants of the saved one. A man may change his habits when he marries, but his con-

stitution remains the same, and it is the constitution, laden with his predominant propensities, which he most inevitably transmits. There were four children of this marriage—Boomellen, and three daughters, the eldest of whom entered a convent by way of the Divorce Court, the second did not get so far as the convent, and the third committed suicide. These troubles Boomellen's mother attributed to her Maker, it had been His will so to afflict her; but He had also been merciful in giving her Boomellen, her precious youngest child, who had never cost her an hour's anxiety in his life, and was all sweetness and goodness—too good, in her estimation, for his position; he ought to have entered the priesthood.

And no doubt Boomellen would have done so had that course been suggested to him; it not being at all his way to offer active opposition to those in authority over him.

His education had been effected in England, and there he had learnt to write a beautiful hand, clear, distinct, firm, and invariable. He was also apt at orthography, and good at mathematics. But what cultivation his mind had otherwise received only his tutors knew, for he never betrayed the slightest knowledge of any subject whatever to any one, so far as we could ascertain. His mother, alluding to his dreamy ways, and the pure simplicity of his nature, called him playfully—

“A child of the age of a man,
Whom the fairies have always in tow.”

She had all kinds of convictions on the subject of his mental attributes, and told us illustrative anecdotes which at first impressed us; but we learnt eventually to doubt

her knowledge of his character, for she had evidently not observed him much since his extreme youth, the tastes and habits she still ascribed to him being those of his childhood. As he grew up, her attention had become more and more absorbed by her own pursuits, and these had gradually weaned her away from him, he going his own way, while she was rioting in pious exercises which left her unaware of the flight of time, and of certain practices which might have caused her to reflect before she again uttered her oft-repeated conviction that Boomellen was too good for anything but the priesthood.

We were new to the neighbourhood, but he made himself at home with us at once, and would ride over often to see us. He was not fond of active exercise as a rule, but riding did not seem to be an accomplishment of his so much as a part of his nature, costing him as little effort as it costs a fish to swim or a bird to fly. But he was truly an incorrigible loiterer, and would often stay all night with us; not because there was anything special to stay for, but only because, being expected to return to dinner, he felt himself detained by an imperative disinclination to be in time. He was always late for every meal, and always the last to come down in the morning, but such breaches of etiquette in no way affected his own equanimity, and if a remark were made on the subject it always seemed to surprise him, as though he could not comprehend why habits that suited himself so perfectly should not be equally agreeable to everybody else.

His father was very impatient with him.

"Gad, gad, gad, sir!" he would exclaim in his quick,

nervous, irritable way—"what are you dawdling about now for? What the devil you are always thinking about I can't imagine."

To which Boomellen made an ox-like answer, dumbly, with big brown eyes.

But we discovered he did pay some deference to his father's wishes—in a way that was quite his own. He began to appear with a book under his arm. Riding, driving, walking, eating or sleeping, the book was always beside him, but no one had ever seen him open it. I asked him one day what that book was. He took it slowly from under his arm, and held it out for me to read the title.

"Why, I don't believe you know what it is yourself," I exclaimed.

"No, I don't," was his candid and unexpected answer, as he returned it to its place under his arm without having had the curiosity to see what it was.

"Then, what in the world are you doing with it?" I asked.

"Well, you see," he answered dreamily, "my father has been at me continually about books. He was always saying, 'I should like to see you with a book, my boy.' So at last I went to the library and took this one out because it was a comfortable size, and I carry it about so that he may see me with a book as he wishes, and be pleased. He reads books himself."

These last words might have been uttered by an automaton, so curiously even, mechanical, and void of all emphasis were they; yet the impression they made was not impartial, but rather as if Boomellen were criticising his

father for doing something which he himself found to be not worth while.

He lingered a little in his loitering way after he had spoken, and then he strolled from the room, and when next I saw him he was lounging about the lawn alone, flipping leaves from the trees with his riding-whip. Eventually he settled himself in a sunny spot, lying full length on the grass, watching the bees and butterflies, the birds skimming about, and the changeful clouds above him. As he looked up into the sky, I was painfully struck with the expression of his face—an expression of settled melancholy. I have often seen the same look since on other faces, and always found that those who wore it were the last survivors of a worn-out race. It is as if they foresaw their inevitable doom, and mourned for the extinction of their family. Some people see the same marked melancholy in the autumn season, and recognise it as a symptom of decadence.

Boomellen spent the rest of that afternoon lying alone contentedly upon the grass, with the book beneath his head as if he were imbibing information through the pores, on Joey Ladle's principle. My father came into my room once, and, looking out at him, shook his head. "Fatal apathy!" he ejaculated, "and what a pity it seems!"

And I knew from the way he spoke that he thought it a hopeless case. *Bümmeln*, an incorrigible loiterer, was what my father constantly called him, and the word, by mispronunciation of his children, was converted into Boomellen, which in time became our only name for him.

There was a long low room situated in an otherwise

disused wing of our house, which had been fitted up for the boys as a work-room. It was far enough from the inhabited part of the house to prevent any one being disturbed by the noise they made, and they were consequently at liberty to amuse themselves as they pleased unrestrainedly. Double doors shut them off from the rest of the house, and their privacy was seldom invaded by the authorities. Faint sounds of hammer and saw and plane, of boxing-gloves, and fencing foils, with shouts of laughter and loud disputes would come from thence through the double doors or open windows on occasion, betokening occupations or amusements never suspected of being otherwise than manly; so that there was no supervision, and the boys developed trustworthiness in proportion to the confidence which was placed in them.

Boomellen found his way at once to this room, and would put the gloves on himself sometimes, and make a languid show of boxing if urged thereto, or would handle the foils for a little, but without interest. He liked to look on best, and often sat by the hour together, silently watching the other boys; presenting a pathetic contrast in his quietude to the restless and noisy display of superabundant vitality which kept them going. Yet, at the first glance he, with his magnificent physique, his finely formed hands and feet, and delicate, regular, high-bred features, looked like a superior being who was sorry and sore to find himself matched with the irregular profiles and the undignified exuberance of his companions. No one would have supposed for a moment that his impressively handsome husk contained not a tithe of the immortal soul which animated their obviously inferior clay.

One evening my father, hearing that Boomellen was in the work-room, went there to look for him in order to get him to take a note back with him. On entering the room he discovered Boomellen, apparently alone, sitting at the table with his arms folded in front of him, and his face resting upon them, as if he were asleep. Beside him were two huge jugs and some empty glasses.

"Where are the boys?" my father exclaimed.

Boomellen slowly raised his head, and greeted him with the besotted stare of a drunken man.

"Boomellen! how is this?" my father demanded sternly.

"You mush exsheush me, sir," Boomellen answered with thick utterance and exaggerated formality, "but the truth ish by achsdent I've got myself vulgarly drunk on beer."

That was not the worst of it, however, for presently, under the table, my father discovered one of his sons still more "vulgarly drunk" than Boomellen himself.

It seems that the other boys had gone out, leaving these two alone together, Boomellen idly sitting on the sill of an open window, in apparently rapt contemplation as was his wont, his companion quietly reading a book of adventures in which, as ill-luck would have it, he had just come upon a graphic account of an heroic drinking-bout. He was absorbed in this when Boomellen muttered something about drink, and left the room. On inquiry it was found that he had gone to one of the servants and asked him for the jugs of beer and glasses, and the man, supposing that they were required for the whole party, gave him as much as he wanted.

"Let us drink," he said when he returned with the beer, and the suggestion, immediately after the vivid description he had been reading of this refined and manly sport, was too great a temptation for the other boy. He tried one glass, and then another, and so on until he collapsed. In his case, however, there was no great harm done, but rather the contrary perhaps, for the affair was a lesson to him, and he was so thoroughly ashamed of himself that he made a vow never to make a beast of himself in that particular way again, and kept it.

But with poor Boomellen it was far otherwise. He inherited a craving for drink, and from that time he had periodical attacks of it to which he yielded without a struggle. No effort had been made to teach him to combat any propensity of the kind, and the idea of resistance never occurred to him apparently. There were those who tried to exercise a kindly preventative influence with him in the matter when it was too late, that is to say, after the disease had declared itself, and he would listen politely to all they had to urge, but at the same time he conveyed the impression that he thought they were giving themselves most unnecessary trouble about a trivial matter, for it was evidently as natural for Boomellen to drink when the craving was on him as it was to eat when he was hungry. It was a sad and significant sight to see him drink. Alone or in company he would settle down to it as if he were doing indifferently an accustomed task that must be done. His favourite place for the purpose was at an open window, and there he would sit in an easy chair, with a little table at his elbow to hold his bottle or jug and glass; and gradually, as he drank, his

eyes would open wider and wider on the outward prospect to begin with, as if he saw by degrees further and further beyond the range of mortal vision into the unimaginable, and was amazed. But imperceptibly as he proceeded the brightness was overcast, the lids became swollen and heavy, his muscles relaxed, his back bowed, his lips lost their firm set, and the expression of his mouth grew weak and vacillating. Then he stretched his long legs straight out before him, and put his hands in his trouser pockets, while his head sank forward on his chest; and so he remained, with eyes staring wide open, yet seeming not to see at all, and motionless save for the regular mechanical effort to lift the fatal glass to his lips, which continued some time after all other power to move voluntarily had ceased. But during no stage of the process did he depart from his habitual manner; he neither laughed, shouted, sang, wept, became quarrelsome, affectionate, nor even excessively maudlin, but just maintained his habitual cheerful silence, and gazed into vacancy until he could see no more. If anything, he rather preferred to be alone at these times, but he never made a point of secluding himself.

When his father heard of these lapses he was extremely angry, because, he said, Boomellen did not conduct the affair like a gentleman: "Gad, gad, gad, sir!" he assured him, "a gentleman gives an entertainment—asks his friends on these occasions, and enjoys himself in good society. He doesn't settle down alone like a hog to stupefy himself. No gentleman drinks for the sake of drinking, but to sharpen his wits and increase his conversational powers. Let me hear that you have done it decently the next time."

Boomellen did not develop this unhappy propensity until he was about nineteen, and he had not up to that time evinced any disreputable tendency: but immediately after that first sudden attack at our house, he began to shock his father's prejudices in another way. As I have said, he was an incorrigible loiterer, but heretofore his loiterings had been solitary. Now, however, he began to appear—in the highways as a rule—accompanied by one of the peasant's daughters—one at a time that is, but not always the same one. The peasantry themselves, good judges in these matters, said: "Och! sir, let his honour alone. Shure the girls is all right, and they'll kape him shtraight." And my father, knowing that *all-rightness* is the rule among Irish peasant girls, took the same view of the matter. Boomellen merely sought in their society a kind of comradeship. The sex of his companions influenced his choice only insensibly, if at all; it was their lack of ideas and happy silence that suited him. The county, however, was naturally scandalised, and determined not to tolerate such conduct, and accordingly Boomellen was "cut" for the time being by everybody who met him anywhere in the neighbourhood in such strange company. But this did not disturb him at all. He was absolutely unaffected by public opinion, and also by the wrath of his father, who grossly misjudged him in this, his own moral nature being so constituted that he could not conceive even the possibility of such a lapse from the established order of iniquity as the innocent roamings of Boomellen with his friends implied.

"Gad, gad, gad, sir!" he said to my father, "the publicity, you know! the publicity! There's no necessity to

make a parade of that kind of thing. A gentleman never does, you know. I strongly object to his making a parade of it. It's deuced bad form."

He reproved Boomellen himself to this effect, but the latter merely gazed into his face with bovine stolidity, as if he sympathised with his mood much better than he understood his remarks, and went his way along the public roads with the peasant girls as before.

The drinking scandals had been carefully concealed from his mother, but some busybody made her acquainted with this new difficulty, and in consequence of her distress it was decided to send Boomellen abroad with a tutor, with a view, it was understood, to having him taught to sow his wild oats conventionally. Boomellen raised no objection. So long as he was not required to decide for himself, he was sure to acquiesce and be satisfied.

He was close upon his majority by this time, and his travels were delayed until after his birthday that he might receive the congratulations of his friends, and the honours due to him as heir to a great estate, on his coming of age. The day itself was the 29th of October, which was late in the year for open-air festivities in that climate, and it was very much feared that the preparations would be spoilt by the weather, especially after the 25th, when a dreadful storm set in, and continued to rage till far into the night of the 28th. The morning itself broke brightly, however, the wind had abated, but a terrific sea still broke in the bay.

Of his own accord, and without a word to any one, Boomellen rose early, went fasting to confession, and received the sacrament of his church.

At twelve o'clock the tenants were to make him a presentation and read an address, to which he would be obliged to reply. How he would comport himself on so momentous an occasion, and, above all, what he would find to say—if anything—was matter of serious conjecture and anxiety to his friends, several of whom were able and willing to coach him well had he consulted them, but he never mentioned the subject at all to any one, nor would he allow any one else to approach it. His father had attempted to do so in his nervous, fidgety way, but Boomellen simply walked off without ceremony the moment he began.

"It will come to him, dear, it will come to him. I have full faith," his mother piously ejaculated. But nobody else was confident.

The ceremony took place out on the lawn, on the west side of the family mansion. Boomellen stood at the top of a broad flight of shallow stone steps which led down from the terrace in front of the house to the grass, upon which the tenants were crowded in rows looking up to him. Just behind him his father and mother stood, and behind them again was a goodly array of the neighbouring gentry with their ladies in bright and becoming costumes. It was a gay and beautiful scene as well as a touching and impressive one. There was a suspicion of sharpness in the air, and the wind, coming in great gusts intermittently, showered the autumn leaves down upon the spectators from the old trees that sheltered the lawn, and whirled them about sportively, while the sun shone, and the odours peculiar to the season smote the sense of smell agreeably. The sounds were soothing, too. They seemed

to lie in layers upon the consciousness—first the sharp call of a bird, insistent, incessant; then the *susurrus* of the breeze through the branches; and further off, yet immeasurably more impressive, the great sea-voice, swelling, lapsing, thunderous, murmurous, all-pervading, distinct from the rest yet somehow including them all.

Boomellen never looked better than at that moment. His great personal beauty showed to perfection as he stood there negligently with his hat in his hand, and the wind tossing his thick, glossy brown hair about picturesquely. It cannot be said that the strange immobility of his countenance was affected by any emotion he may have felt, but there was a bright, though rapt expression in his dark eyes as he gazed down on the nervous old man who, standing a step or two below him, made him the presentation in the name of the other tenants, and then proceeded to read the address. The tenants wished to express their affection for Boomellen. They reminded him that he had been born and bred upon the estate, and grown up amongst them to the delight of their eyes and the joy of their hearts. "It's a proud woman your mother must be the day, yer honour"—so ran in unaffected sincerity the simple language of the address—"for there's neither man nor woman, boy nor girl, in the country but has a good word for ye, for ye niver wronged a sowl in all yer life, nor gave wan any other than was their due."

There was a murmur of assent to this among the tenants. Boomellen's mother pressed her handkerchief to her eyes convulsively, and some fancied that the rapt look on his own face became intensified.

The old farmer who had read the address rolled it up

as he concluded, handed it to Boomellen with a stiff obeisance, awkwardly stumbled down the steps, and took his place again with the other tenants. Then there was a pause, and many hearts began to beat to suffocation. Would he ever be able to utter a word?

Boomellen gazed before him with parted lips for some seconds before he attempted to speak, and all agreed afterwards that during the pause the look on his face was as of one who listens with pleased, though strained attention. The crisp crackle of autumn leaves, the rush and swish of a sudden gust through the branches of the trees, and the sullen roar of monstrous waves lashing themselves furiously in ineffectual might against the rocky barrier of the stupendous cliffs alone filled our ears in the interval, but it was always believed by the people that, over and above this, Boomellen had heard what was not for us, and seen that which was invisible to all but him.

He was not nervous.

"My friends—ladies and gentlemen," he began at last, gathering the words slowly and with difficulty, but composedly, "I am glad to see you here to-day. I thank you for your kind congratulations. My heart is touched." Holding his hat and the rolled-up address in front of him in his left hand, he folded the right upon it, and, looking at the ground, paused a minute as though to collect his thoughts, while those about him, strongly impressed, broke out into a low murmur of encouragement. He looked up. "You tell me that I am called to a high position," he recommenced in the same slow, difficult way—"to honours, which I should deserve—to riches, which I should dispose of to the glory of God and for the good

of mankind. And that is true—I am called. It is not my choice to be here.” Again he paused, but this time there was absolute silence. “I have—there is something—comes into my mind—about”—he raised his right hand and brushed the hair, which a gust of wind had blown upon his forehead, back out of his eyes, then, with bent brows, peered out into the distance over the heads of the people, as though trying to make out something he could not clearly distinguish—“about,” he repeated, exactly as if he were deciphering a difficult handwriting—“about being taken from the wrath to come.” A curious expression of intentness settled upon the upturned faces. “If I am not worthy,” Boomellen pursued more fluently, “not worthy of my position—if I am not equal to the duties which, as you say, in course of time must devolve upon me; then I pray that I may be taken *from the wrath to come*. I pray that I may be removed before I lose your hearts—or—forefeit your good opinion.”

Anything more unexpected Boomellen could not have uttered, and a deep, inarticulate murmur of emotion arose from the crowd, an unintelligible murmur, for the people were at a loss to know how such sentiments should be acknowledged. A great uneasiness had gradually taken possession of us all. Everybody felt that there was something wrong, but none of us could have defined the feeling.

We held our breath while waiting for him to speak again.

He was looking beyond us now in the same strange way he had done at first; then all at once, but quietly, he put on his hat and, raising his arm, pointed over the heads of the tenants, towards the sea.

"There is a ship in distress," he said.

Those on the lawn glanced nervously over their shoulders and everybody listened, while in the painful silence that ensued the tension became so pronounced that, on the sudden booming of a great gun, many of the ladies shrieked.

In a moment all order was over. The people on the lawn broke their ranks, and, turning from the house, made for the cliffs in haste, while those on the terrace streamed down the steps, mingled with the tenants, and all together hurried in confusion in the same direction. It was not far, but once out of the shelter of the grounds we were met and hindered by the full force that remained to the gale, which was blowing in off the sea. Petticoats became unmanageable, fluttering ribbons bound their wearers to each other in wild entanglement, hats were whirled away, but nobody heeded any inconvenience of that kind—especially when we came within sight of the sea, and stood in our gay holiday-attire, conscious of the cruelly incongruous contrast we presented to the white-faced, storm-battered wretches on the wreck, which was being driven to destruction before our eyes—with small hope of rescue—on the rocks below. There was no life-boat on the coast at that time, and no other boat that would be likely to live in such a sea. Up at the coast-guard station, from whence the gun had been fired, rockets with life-saving apparatus were being got ready, but all too slowly, as it seemed to the horror-stricken spectators.

"Will no one do anything?" Boomellen's mother exclaimed indignantly, wringing her hands. "Are none of you men enough to do anything?"

Boomellen was standing beside her, and she seized his arm, as if to shake him out of his apathy, for he appeared to be quite unmoved, although we were so close that we could have recognised the people on the ship had we known any of them, and their sufferings were terrible to see—and all the more terrible because we were so near, and yet so powerless to render them any assistance.

The wreck was a large brig. One mast was gone, the other was hanging over the side, and there was a dead man entangled in the rigging. On deck a poor woman was clinging to a bit of cordage with one arm, while she held a baby on the other. Her dress was open at the neck, and being saturated, clung close to her gaunt figure, making her look as if she had nothing else on. Her short thin dark hair was also plastered in ragged patches about her forehead and neck by the water. She seemed to be shivering, her face was haggard and colourless, and she stared up at us with wild eyes, but her mouth was firmly set. The men beside her uttered heartrending cries for help, but she was mute, and the child hung limply on her arm as if it were dead.

From among the mountainous cumuli which fled across the sky before the wind, pitilessly bright sunbursts flashed full upon the wreck, giant waves met with a shock in her wake, rose high in the air, and fell with a thud upon her, and great green foam-flecked masses of treacherous water swept her decks now and then from stem to stern, threatening to submerge her. About her, as if in ghastly anticipation, a throng of broad-winged sea-birds hovered—up and down, in and out, back and forth, up and down, *da capo*, all dancing a regular, rhythmical,

mocking, aerial measure, with sharp shrill cries, to the tune of the winds and waves.

When the shrieks of the people on the wreck arose, those on the cliff responded to them, and men and women here and there threw themselves down upon their knees, and lifted their hands to heaven.

In the midst of this awful scene, a tiny boat suddenly shot out from under the cliff, a toy-tub of a dinghy not safe for an instant in such a sea. It was being rowed in a diagonal direction towards the wreck, and the people on the cliff with a groan recognised Boomellen. Why it should have occurred to him alone to do such a desperate thing, those who had caught the petulant reproach implied in his mother's manner never doubted; but that it was desperate he did not seem to realise, for his face was set serenely—rapt as it had been when he had stood in safety, seeming to listen, on the steps of his father's house half an hour before. His hat had gone, and the wind tumbled his hair. As he shot out from under the cliff, he looked up at us all with

“ . . . such a brightness in his eye!
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.”

We could not see where the waves broke beneath us for the shelving of the cliff, but from time to time a shower of blinding white spray rose high in the air above us, a lace-like veil of foam, concealing the sea, and falling back upon us in heavy showers. This occurred almost immedi-

ately after Boomellen appeared. Holding our breath in an agony of suspense, we saw him for one moment, then came the blinding spray, but when we looked again he was gone. He had vanished for ever, and as utterly as if he had never been.

Ineffectual life, ineffectual death ; but perhaps it was appropriate that the shining sea should take him.

KANE, A SOLDIER SERVANT.

HIS real name was Keene, but Cain he mispronounced it, being of Irish blood ; and Society, reluctant to brand him with the accursed appellation of Adam's eldest son, compromised the matter by spelling it Kane. And Kane he remained to us all till the end of the chapter.

He was a reprobate, and he looked old, but was in point of fact not so well up in years as he was in wicked ways, being only about forty when he came to us. He had served in the tropics for many years, and had had a hard life in other aspects both in and out of the service, and that had aged him.

He was a short man, narrow-chested for a soldier, "bad on his feet"—rather hobbling in his gait, as if his ammunition boots hurt him. His mouth was large and straight, a mere gash, hidden by a heavy moustache. His nose was broad at the nostrils, his eyes small, bright, "peery," and quick-glancing, but expressionless, and set so deep in their sockets and so shaded by bushy eyebrows that their vivacity was not striking. His hair, innocent of parting, stood up on end all round his forehead, which was low, as it does in some monkeys. It was grey, and abundant. So also were his moustache and whiskers. The latter he chose to wear Dundreary fashion, although

contrary to regulation, and the consequence was a standing order to shave, which order Kane met by a standing objection to do so. At first, under compulsion, that is to say in the presence of a non-commissioned officer told off to see the duty done, Kane had been compelled to dock his beloved whiskers. He would look ashamed of himself, and exhibit symptoms of mental depression for some time afterwards, but would appear eventually with his whiskers as big as ever, and an air of mild triumph not to be concealed. And this happened so often that at last none but new-comers ever thought of interfering with his whiskers—or, indeed, of interfering with him at all. For Kane was a privileged person. He was always being humoured and let off, and had managed by dint of perseverance to get his own way in everything. But whether his persistence was due to obtuseness or to force of character, I cannot say. Only his position at the depot was unique, and he had made it for himself somehow. One day a newly appointed commanding officer held a kit inspection. All the men's clothing had to be laid out neatly on their beds, and of course our own Kane's with the rest. His things appeared to be in good order, especially the socks, which were folded to perfection, with the long welts uppermost. Kane stood to attention beside the bed, with a face as impassive as that of an ape in mischief. The Colonel seemed satisfied and was passing on, when, as ill luck would have it, somebody stopped him with a word. He paused to reply, absently turning the socks over with his swaggerstick as he spoke, and finally picking one up on the point of it. The welt was whole, but the rest of the sock, alas! dropped into what looked like an elaborate

pattern in woollen lace. The trick caused some amusement, but it also called the Colonel's attention to Kane himself, and he asked who that shambling old fellow was. Kane was a time-expired man, who ought to have been retired long before, and was only kept on by the connivance of everybody—at least of all who knew him; and there was always a chance of our losing him in the event of a commanding officer coming who knew him not, and sending him about his business before he had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. The evil day was deferred, however, on this occasion by the timely tact of the Adjutant, and afterwards, when the Colonel himself was heard to speak of Kane as "old heel-and-toe," we knew he was safe for a while. He could not have marched a mile or carried a rifle to save his life, and had therefore to be returned in some capacity which would get him excused from drill, and, accordingly, before he became a soldier-servant, he was attached to the hospital, and slept there. On arriving at the depot, his master lived in barracks for a short time, and, trained servants being scarce, Kane was appointed to wait on him as a temporary arrangement, but continued to sleep in hospital. He had never been an officer's servant before, but it was thought that his honesty would make up for his ignorance; and the latter was not such a great inconvenience after all, as he soon learnt from the other servants what was required of him. In this new billet he was also exempt from martial duties.

He proved himself from the first to be the most methodical old machine on earth. Having set himself to perform a duty at a certain time nothing short of physical

force would prevent him. Lighting the fire in the morning was the first difficulty. It was very cold weather, and Kane chose to light it at an inconveniently early hour, and would come clattering down the bare passages in his heavy ammunition boots before daylight, humming like a steam saw. He hummed always, whatever he might be doing and wherever he might be, keeping up a sort of buzz on and about one note, scarcely ever as much as a semitone above or below, and this, together with his peculiar step, woke everybody, and many were the boots and *blessings* showered upon him by the young officers, and much was he remonstrated with about the early hours he kept, but arguments of all kinds were unavailing. His master ordered him to come later, and he answered "Yes, sorr," respectfully, but appeared next day as usual. The order was repeated, but the result was the same. When asked what he meant by coming so early, he would meekly hold his peace, but would look at the clock in such a way as to make his master doubt if he had not inadvertently mentioned that time, and the result would be a lowering of the master's tone, and the eventual triumph of the man.

When we, "the family," arrived, Kane kindly came to help us to settle, and I made his acquaintance among the packing cases. I was in the front kitchen, and, hearing a curious, monotonous humming, I looked about to see whence it came. At first nothing was visible but a big box in the back kitchen and a stack of straw; but on peering over this I caught the blaze of a scarlet coat, and there was old Kane on his knees, his bushy grey whiskers all powdered with sawdust, unpacking some Oriental china

with a loving touch that won my heart. He was too absorbed to notice me, but that does not mean that he was working hard. He was merely interested in some good specimens of an art entirely new to him. He took each plate up tenderly and admired it on all sides, and then laid it on the ground and looked at it from a distance with a pleased expression of countenance; and all the time he kept up a hum as incessant as the babble of a brook.

He had come to help us also as a temporary arrangement. As a servant he was practically useless. The notion of Kane with his curious feet, in livery, or Kane with his bushy whiskers waiting at table, was ridiculous; but before he had been a week in the house he had cast his spell upon us. A sense of humour is in the family; he amused us; and so we kept him—and got a maid to do his work.

But it must not be supposed that he did absolutely nothing. He took a certain amount on himself when he first came, and did that amount with the regularity of clockwork, but neither more nor less, however much he might be begged, prayed, conciliated, threatened, commanded, or caressed. In the early morning he brushed boots, polished some brass-work about the front door, rubbed up his master's spurs and spur-chains, and brushed his coats and hats. The latter he did with an energy and frequency that destroyed the nap very early in their existence. He must have found something morally elevating in the brushing of hats, for if he happened to be in a more than usually conscientious mood, he returned to them and did them again. The overcoats he brushed as

they hung from the pegs as if he were grooming a horse—balancing himself against them with his left hand; currying with his right, and looking out sharply as if it were for a kick, while he kept up that buzzing noise through his puffed-out lips, which seems to be indispensable in the grooming of a horse.

In the afternoon he cleaned the knives and plate, and smoked a pipe; and I think that was all he did do. He also fed the birds and cats, but that was in the morning before breakfast. The cats he did not like, but as they were members of the family he was always polite to them. For Kane was loyal before everything.

His attachment to the youngest of our party, a little golden-haired boy of six, was dog-like in its dumb fidelity. They were always together if Kane could manage it, and he never objected to anything he had to do for the child. He would grub about in the ditches for monsters to put in his aquarium, and bring buckets of water of his own accord for it; and he would even carry parcels up from the town for the boy, although it is against orders for a soldier to be seen carrying a parcel, and is the thing of all others that they most dislike to have to do. They were a curious pair, the bright intelligent child with his babble of innocent talk and laughter, and the wreck of a man, vice-worn, silent, and subdued. What passed through his "dim, dreaming consciousness" as he listened to the boy was often a subject of speculation, but Kane could not have expressed it himself. He had not even been taught to read and write; every intellectual faculty was dormant; probably his command of language was limited to the fewest possible number of words; his powers of

comprehension were purely emotional; it was through his senses that his brain was reached; but he did feel, I am sure of that. Things beautiful delighted him as they do a child, he appreciated without understanding them, and they made him "feel nice," as his little master used to express it—"Oh, mamma, do sing that song again! It makes me feel so nice!"

It was curious though to mark Kane's limitations. Certain things which delighted us had no power whatever to move him, the songs of birds for instance. He knew that I enjoyed them. I brought up a thrush by hand one summer, and waited eagerly to hear him sing. He made no attempt for a long time, but at last one morning, when I was not thinking of him, I was disturbed by a noise which sounded like a cork being rubbed on a window-pane, and Kane came hobbling in, the bearer of good news evidently. "Ma'am!" he exclaimed, "will ye haarrk to the meelodious throosh?" One noise from a bird's throat was as pleasant as another to poor Kane.

Kane's strong point was his honesty, his weak point an amorous disposition. To be good looking was in Kane's estimation to be virtuous, and he was consequently at the mercy of every worthless creature wearing a petticoat who chose to smile upon him. On one occasion, while he was with us, he stayed absent without leave, and, on being sought, was found in a small public-house with fourteen damsels, treating them all.

There was some depth, doubtless, in this poor man which we never plumbed, some power to care beneath that surface of quaint ways. But it was a curious, lonely life he led, such a life as would have driven most men

mad. As he could not read, he had no resources in himself, and his pipe was his only solace at idle times. In the afternoon when he returned to Barracks, his day's work was practically done. He left our house between three and four, and did not reappear until seven next morning: and usually spent the interval in sleep. He had no relations that I ever heard of, and made no friends. There was another prematurely old reprobate, very like him in appearance, who was said to be his "chum," but I do not know upon what authority, as they were never seen together. Perhaps it was the singular resemblance which made the men say first of all, that they ought to be "chums," and afterwards drift into the habit of thinking that they were. They were men of kindred vices, which is always a bond of union, and of the same standing in the service, having been recruits together; but still I do not believe that they were friends, and I am inclined to think that Kane never really had a friend. The other men tried "to chum" with him, but he repelled them all, and went his own solitary way, silent and uncomplaining. I was going to say unobservant too, but those deep-sunk eyes of his looked out from under his bushy brows at times, and sparkled in a way that, taken with a slight quivering of the lips under his moustache, betrayed some change of expression disguised by that crinose mask, which suggested a doubt on the subject. But at any rate there must have been a time when even Kane was young and ardent, full of pride and pleasure in the present, and plan and purpose for the future; a love-time when the ignorant private soldier had felt himself for the moment "equal to the god."

We never heard the details of the story. All of it that we do know, is what every raw recruit was told when he came to the barracks. "Do you see that old fellow there? Well, he cut his throat once." "What for?" "'Cos he was a fool." "But *why* was he a fool?" "Oh, something about his young woman. They didn't hit it off. Deserted him or something. At any rate, he cut his throat." "And he didn't die?" "Why no, ye idiot! how could he be there if he'd died?" And how, one wonders, after feeling strongly enough to do such a deed, did he drift into such passivity, taking no thought for the morrow, nor for anything else apparently?

But, although the apathetic state in which we found him had become his normal condition, he had his moods like other men, and would break out occasionally—break out of barracks and disappear for two or three days at a time. On his return he would be made prisoner for being absent without leave, and let off as a rule with a fine. Then he would return to us, slink into the back kitchen, looking very much ashamed of himself, and behave as usual till the next time. We were very much troubled about these drunken bouts of his, but the difficulty was to know what to do. Should he be sent to his duty if it occurred again? Surely not, for in that case he would be discharged from the service, and then what would become of him? But wasn't he a Roman Catholic? Why not try the priest? There was one in the town at the time, of whom we knew something, and as a forlorn hope Kane was sent to him one morning with a note, detailing the circumstances of the case, and begging him to use his influence to induce Kane to take the pledge. The latter, not

knowing the object of the visit, was surprised into compliance. The priest only induced him to take it for three months, thinking it not wise to dishearten him by trying his fortitude for too long a period to begin with. And Kane kept the pledge religiously to the day, and then he "went on the spree." He certainly *did* "go on the spree." He must have been looking forward to that "spree," and thinking of little else during the whole three months. When he returned he was still suffering from the effects thereof, and, taking advantage of the consequent depression, we sent him again to the priest, and again he took the pledge for three months, kept it, doubtless enjoying the novelty of having something to look forward to the while; and then he had his "spree." And this happened regularly for two years, during which time we had nothing but his periodical absences to complain of, as he never came to the house drunk. But about the end of the second year, the other servants began to find fault with him. They said he did nothing, and made himself objectionable, and they would rather do his work than have him about.

We did not listen to these hints for some time, thinking the real truth was that a younger and smarter man would please the maids better; but, unfortunately for Kane, he broke through his rule at Christmas, and came to the house one day the worse for drink. He had a black eye, too, which he said was caused by a splinter that flew in his face, when he was chopping firewood. The fault was overlooked on that occasion, it being Christmas time, and every temptation having been put in the poor man's way. But it happened again a short time afterwards, and

what with that and the other servants' complaints, we felt we must get rid of him.

It would be hard to say why we were all so attached to this old good-for-nothing, but of all the household retainers we have had to part with, I think he was the one about whom we felt heaviest-hearted when it came to the point. The quality of faithfulness which we had discerned in him from the first was, perhaps, at the bottom of it. He was a worthless old dog, but he was our own old dog, and for that we valued him. That he felt as much as we did about it I cannot say, for he made no sign, but just plodded on in his old way to the last, and then stumped out, without a word to any of us. One day, he came and did his work as usual, but he did not return on the next. That was all. We shall not forget him, however. His accustomed place is still empty, and will not again be filled.

I have thought since he left us, that his apparent indifference was entirely due to a certain shyness, the kind of shyness which makes a sensitive child dumb. He had no power of expression, and was shamefaced; but he must have felt. He left the barracks, however, when he was discharged from the service a short time afterwards, as he had left us, without a word; and from the day of his departure nobody ever saw him there again. He had considerably over twenty years' service, and most men would have gone back to talk over old times, but not so Kane; nor did he leave any address behind him, so that nobody at the depot ever heard anything about him after he took his discharge. There had been a rumour for some time before he left us, that he was "keeping com-

pany with a young woman," which meant a serious engagement, but the notion seemed so preposterous we took no notice of it, thinking it was chaff. Then it was said that the "young woman" was not young at all, but an elderly widow with five children, and this news struck us as even more objectionable than the other, for we all imagined a big coarse woman with red arms, a perfect termagant in fact, for whom poor old Kane, who was quite decrepit, would be no match. The idea of Kane in love was ridiculous, but the idea of Kane in bondage was not to be tolerated, so we dismissed it. We felt he was one of those characters round whom the myth and story collect inevitably after their disappearance, and were prepared to accept all that might be said of him in future with caution.

It was months after his departure before we heard anything definite about him, and then one of the boys burst in upon us suddenly with the startling news that Kane had gone on the stage! We received the announcement with derision, but there was some truth in it after all. A circus had been settled in the place for some time, and Kane was employed there to carry a flag in a procession at a shilling a night. This was the first positive news we had had of him, but soon afterwards I met him in the street. He was dressed in blue serge like a working man in his best things, but looked more soldier-like than he had done in uniform. I stopped to speak to him.

"And is it true that you are married, Kane?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"I should like to go and see your wife if I may. Where do you live?"

He at once gave me an address; but Mrs. Kane did not live there, and no one in that neighbourhood had ever heard of such people.

Concluding that he had his own reasons for misleading me, we determined to respect them, and accordingly made no further enquiries. The next news we had of him was equally startling, but in another way. We were told that Kane was in prison for neglecting to maintain his wife and step-children. We doubted this, however, for we learnt at the same time that his wife was a fustian cutter, and as work was plentiful just then she could not be in absolute want. We meant to make proper enquiries, however, but delayed for some reason or other, and the next thing we heard of him was the sad news that he had committed suicide. It was said that he had hanged himself because of his wife's misconduct. We blamed ourselves then for not doing more for him in spite of himself, and had rather a lively discussion on the subject one evening, half our party maintaining that since he chose to sever the connection we were not at all bound to look after him, while the rest retorted that as we were attached to him we were bound to look after him, attachment being a bond which carries obligation as well as pleasure. In the midst of the discussion the Colonel came in. "Is it Kane you are bothering about?" he said. "The old scoundrel! I saw him in the town just now, selling sticks."

For the next two years we heard nothing more of him. During the winter of the second year the Lanca-

shire operatives suffered terribly from the prevalent commercial depression, and consequent want of work. Soup kitchens, and clothing clubs, and every other effort known to the charitable, was being made to prevent starvation and relieve distress, but numbers of the people died nevertheless, and quite a third of the population tramped away to other places in search of work; and as we heard nothing of Kane we thought it likely that he had drifted away with the rest. One day, however, I was told that a poor woman wanted to see me. This was an hourly occurrence, and we were all more or less worn with the constant strain. She was a delicate-looking woman, poorly, but cleanly clad, with a sweet and patient face.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," she said, "but will ye plaze come to see me husband? Shure he's dying, he is. He wouldn't let me come to ask ye for nawthing, but, now he's going, he'd like to spake wid ye, if ye'd be so good."

"Who is your husband?" I asked.

"Kane!"

She led me up a narrow stair into a large, light garret, a poor place, furnished with a chair and table and box or two, but little else.

On the floor in the corner nearest to the scrap of fire was a straw mattress covered with canvas, and on this the old, worn soldier lay, partially dressed, and propped with a pillow made of a sack stuffed with straw and covered with an old rug. His wife took off her shred of a shawl and spread it over his feet, which were bare. He was evidently dying, but the bushy beard which he had grown since I saw him last was neatly trimmed, so also was his

KANE, A SOLDIER SERVANT.

There was a general air of cleanliness about him, and he and order successfully struggling to the dirty and death.

He put his thin right hand to his forehead when he tried to look impassive as the men do when their officers, but he was too weak to conceal satisfaction that lit his haggard countenance

by a little box near the bed, and I sat down. The snow was falling softly outside, and very cold, but fortunately we knew only too well we would be wanted when we were sent for in and a servant had followed me with food and warm blankets. When I covered Kane's latter, he patted them with a pleased expression then hid his poor benumbed hands beneath the grateful warmth. His wife resumed her seat and stood in apathetic silence, watching the crackling up the fire. I gave her some wine, and she lay down, staring stupidly before her, while I sat at intervals unheeded on her folded hands. "Well!" I said, "why didn't you send for me

and she roused herself upon that, and answered

"I didn't, ma'am, because we wasn't married—as you would like. I had another husband, and he beat the children, and he took the money I earned, and spent it on drink; and Kane says, 'if you'll marry me, I'll protect you,' and I couldn't because of the other mon."

But he went away, and it was a hard battle to keep the childer, but I did it, and got a little home about me, and had a shilling in me pocket, and me close dacent, and the childer nate and clane; and then he come back and bate me again, and druv the childer out into the street, and used language such as niver was, and sould all me things for the dhrink, and Kane ses, ses he, 'Mary,' ses he, 'don't ye be afther standing it,' ses he. 'Hev him up, and the magistrate 'll separate ye, and thin ye can marry me,' ses he. 'I've got me pension, and you and the childer shan't starve, whatever comes,' ses he. So I had him up, and the magistrate separated us, and gave him six months; but the praste wouldn't marry me and Kane. He said I was still me other husband's wife, but Kane wouldn't belave it after all the magistrate had said about granting a separation; so we went to the Registry, and Kane tould him I hadn't a husband, and he married us his way. And Kane kep' his worrd by me and the childer, he did, true for ye, ma'am. But the bad times cam', and I could get no worrk, neither could he, and what was his pension, ma'am? a shilling a day, and three of them a week for lodgings, and five childer to keep. And I wanted him to go to you, and he wouldn't, because why, he ses, ses he, we wasn't married as you would like. And Kane got waker and waker wi' givin' his bread to the childer; and thin, ma'am, me firrst husband cam back, and they had a set-to, and Kane got the worrst of it, and he's laid there iver since, three months. And I wanted to go to you, and he wouldn't let me, because, he ses, ses he, we wasn't married as you would like. But me firrst husband was killed last week, ma'am, in a street row, and then Kane ses to me,

ses he, 'Fetch the praste, Mary,' ses he. And the praste cam' this morning, and we was married again, and then Kane ses, 'Mary,' ses he, 'go for the missus now.' So I cam'."

T'oo late. Three days afterwards I covered the straw mattress with flowers, the best to be had for love or money, and stood looking down at the quiet face, pinched from privation, but placid, with the look of content upon it which it had worn from the moment I entered his room.

Poor Kane!—poor ignorant Kane! immoral old Irish reprobate, liar, drunkard, inciter to bigamy, would-be suicide—dead for want of the bread he had given to his rival's children, dead defending them and the woman he loved—faithful, honest, uncomplaining, considerate to the last; his poor, decrepit body gone to its hard-earned rest, but the chivalrous soul so long concealed from the world that wants words, ah! where in Heaven's justice will it be when opportunities are considered, virtues weighed against vices, and the award of merit meted out to prince and private alike by the power which is no respecter of persons?

AH MAN.

A HOUSE managed by Chinese servants works as if it were subject to natural law which is inevitable rather than to human discipline that can be evaded. If you dismiss your butler at breakfast, his substitute will stand behind your chair at lunch, and go about his business from the moment he arrives as if he had been in your service all his life. Once let him know your wishes, and everything will be arranged to suit them ; but woe be to you if you are not a person of regular habits, for his motive power is a kind of clockwork which resents interference, and if you would put him back or hurry him on the probability is he will stop or break up altogether—at least, this is the view of him that is generally accepted. Ordinary Europeans who come in contact with him never seem to suspect that a servant so methodical can be anything but a machine. What precisely the human nature of him is in detail, wherein exactly he resembles or differs from us, opportunities never enabled me to decide ; but once there came under my observation a profoundly interesting specimen, interesting as an enigma, the solution to which I seem to see, although I cannot find a formula in which to express it.

Our butler had been dismissed in the morning ; and

in the afternoon I was sitting alone upstairs in the verandah overlooking a grove of mango trees, the heavy foliage of which formed a screen between me and inquisitive amahs and coolies who might be loitering in the road below. The fruit shone ochre against the green in the cloudless sunshine. There were two doors to the verandah, one leading into my sitting-room, and another on to the landing. Ascending to the latter was a carpetless staircase which echoed noisily to every tread, and as I sat fanning myself drowsily with a book on my lap, I became aware of the dull regular thud of rigid wooden soles clumping up, and knew that a Chinaman was ascending. It was a peculiarly emphatic, doggedly determined clump, clump up, not at all like the step of any of our own servants. I thought there was the stiffness of age in it, and when it stopped an undue time outside the closed door, I supposed my visitor was recovering his breath before he knocked. He omitted the latter ceremony altogether, however, as being a foolish, "foreign devil" fashion, perhaps, to which a superior Chinaman could not be expected to conform, and, opening the door at his leisure, looked in. His eyes met mine in the act, but his sallow face might have been a mask worn to conceal his emotions, so perfectly blank was it of any intelligible expression.

We surveyed each other some seconds in silence, then he suggested abruptly in a gruff voice, uttering the words without emphasis, as if they had been let loose mechanically: "Wanshee butler?"

Certainly I wanted a butler, but my first thought was, "Not one with your manners, my friend, nor with such a cast of countenance." I did not say so, however. In

fact I said nothing, but sat still and stared hard at him, thereby causing his conscience to smite him without intending it, for as I continued to gaze he removed his little black silk cap, slowly unwound his long thick pigtail, which had been coiled round his head, dropped it behind him, and replaced his cap. It is disrespectful for a servant to appear with his pigtail rolled up, but I could not tell if his coming so had been insolence or inadvertence. In any case, however, I considered that he had apologised, and let it pass.

He had a bundle of what looked like foreign * letters in his hand, "chits" of character doubtless from former employers, and these he handed to me now without further preliminary. "Ah Man has asked me to write him a recommendation," I read on the first, "and as I am convinced that he will bathe in my blood if I refuse, I write him this in self-defence." "This is to certify," the next ran, "that Ah Man is the wickedest old scoundrel in China." "If you have courage for anything engage Ah Man, but not otherwise, as with him you never know what to expect," I read further; and yet another was couched in similar terms.

Ah Man had watched me reading these productions. "Very good chit?" he suggested with some show of self-satisfaction when I looked up.

"Remarkable," I answered. "There is a kind of agreement about them that is convincing."

"My stop?" he asked.

I pursed my mouth, and shook my head.

* In China everything that is not Chinese is called foreign.

He turned imperturbably to go, or so I should have thought had I not surprised a glance of his oblique brown eyes, a flash expressive of despair if ever an eye expressed anything, or so I feared, and I hesitated.

"Wait, Ah Man," I said. "To-morrow I let you know."

"Chin chin," he responded, taking his left hand in his right and shaking it towards me, Chinese fashion. "Chin chin," he muttered again as he slowly closed the door. Clearly, it seemed to me, his courtesies depended upon my good manners; if I showed him no consideration, I need not expect any.

My next visitor was a colonial official, who arrived so soon after Ah Man had retired that I was sure they must have met on the stairs, and I was right.

"What was that old rascal, Ah Man, doing here?" he began immediately.

"You know him, then?"

"Know him? I should think so! Everybody knows him, and no one will have him in their service. He's notorious."

"But what has he done?" I asked.

"Everything, I should think. He made his name and became celebrated through taking advantage of an indiscretion on the part of one of his masters. There is a certain kind of British officer, you know, who thrashes his servants. He comes from India, where the natives are weakly and cannot retaliate, and therefore it is safe to thrash them. One Captain Guthrie Brimston, who was quartered here, entertained the same delusion with regard to the Chinese at first. Ah Man was his servant and an-

noyed him one day, and he determined to thrash him. He called him in for the purpose, and gave him fair warning of his intention. 'All light,'* Ah Man responded cheerfully. Then he went to the door and bolted it, which, having accomplished, he squared up to Captain Guthrie Brimston, politely intimated that he was ready, begged him to come on, and offered to wipe him 'off of a face of cleation.' By that time, however, Captain Guthrie Brimston had changed his mind; but, unfortunately for him, Ah Man, with the tenacity for which his race is distinguished, stuck to the point; and it was a poor satisfaction which Captain Guthrie Brimston afterwards secured at the police court."

"Ah Man is interesting!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he answered, laughing; "he has distinguished himself in some equally unexpected way in every house he has entered yet."

"He is decidedly interesting," I repeated. "There is the charm of the unexpected in his character, which is irresistible."

"Well, I warn you, if you have anything to do with him you'll repent it."

When my visitor had gone I rang for the boy. "Go catchee Ah Man chop chop,"† I said. "My likee he for butler."

So many original recommendations had been too much for me; I was impatient to secure him, and felt that if I failed I should have lost one of the great chances of my life.

* In pidgin English *l* is substituted for *r*.

† Immediately.

Next day when I came down to breakfast I found beside my plate an exquisite arrangement of pinky blossom in a blue and white china jar of quaint design. Jar and flowers together were a work of art. "Where *did* they come from?" I exclaimed.

"My no savee," the boy answered stolidly.

A servant came round from behind and handed me a dish at the same moment, and on looking up in surprise to see who it was, for I had not noticed another in the room, I recognised the sinister visage of Ah Man, the new butler; but I never dreamt of associating him with the exquisite offering of flowers.

Besides the butler and "boy," who answers to a footman at home, we had a Larn-pidgin in our household at that time. Larn-pidgin (literally Learn-business) is a young boy who comes to be trained; he gives his help in return for the training, and does as much damage as he can in the time. We happened just then to have a particularly interesting Larn-pidgin. He was a Christian by profession, a thief by nature, devoured by curiosity, and garrulous to a degree, his favourite *rôle* being that of chorus to cast light on all that was obscure in the conduct of the other members of the establishment. I was his audience, or rather his victim, for he never spared me the result of his observations if it pleased him to keep me informed. He did not profess to have any respect for me, but spoke of me habitually as the "foreign devil's" wife, mimicked my manners, and laughed unaffectedly at my dress.

Larn-pidgin was privileged to be present at every meal, and took advantage of the privilege more or less

regularly. As might have been expected, he had come in that morning to study Ah Man, and found the pursuit so absorbing that he did not trouble himself to wait upon us, but tacked about the room, taking observations apparently from different points of view. Suddenly there was a tremendous crash behind me, and boy and butler rolled on the floor amidst much wreckage of plates and dishes. They had been going quickly in opposite directions, but had been brought up short with a jerk, Larn-pidgin having managed, as they stood at the side-board taking things up to carry away, to tie their pigtailed together. So I thought we might anticipate wild times of trouble between him and Ah Man.

The next time he had me at his mercy, being alone, he began about the dainty gift of flowers. Having been brought up by the missionaries, he spoke much better English than the other servants.

"Wanshee know who kumshaw * you them flowers?" he began. "*I savee. That Ah Man.*"

"Why should he give me them?" I asked.

"Lord knows," Larn-pidgin piously ejaculated.

In spite of ominous predictions, all went well in the household from the time that Ah Man took charge of it. He was an excellent servant. There was the occasional hubbub of a fierce dispute down in the servants' quarters, and in looking over the verandah one caught glimpses of Larn-pidgin fugitive, and Ah Man with a stick in hot pursuit; but these were outdoor incidents that did not affect the indoor comfort of our daily lives, or the re-

* Present.

spectable decorum of our attendants when on duty. Most of my time was spent in reading, writing, and music, and I soon noticed that Ah Man took a curious interest in my pursuits. He alarmed me at first by persistently dusting my papers, about the arrangement of which I was particular; but I soon found that although he lingered long over them, patting them as if he were petting them, he never disturbed their order. My music, too, invariably brought him upstairs, and he would loiter about listening as long as I played. Larn-pidgin had done the same at first, and I had been so glad to think I was giving the poor boy pleasure that in a weak moment I asked him what he thought of my playing.

"I tinkee awful," he rejoined.

There come crises in life, whether of mental or physical origin, which set in with a sudden distaste for everything hitherto habitual. Interest goes out of the old pursuits, joy from the old pleasures, life is blank as a wall without windows, and the patient sinks at last utterly enervated. When one falls into this phase in the tropics the result is apt to be serious. You pass from an energetic attitude to an easy chair, from the chair to a couch, and then to bed, from whence you will not again arise unless roused by some vitalising force from without. It was the hot weather when Ah Man came to us, and soon afterwards I fell into this state of indifference. It grew upon me gradually until all the old occupations were abandoned. I was not very observant at the time, but it has since occurred to me that as my health declined I began to see more and more of Ah Man. He never spoke except in answer to some remark of mine,

and then his replies consisted of a single syllable, or even a grunt if he could make that do, but he began to hover with his feather dusting-brush in his hand about my sitting-room, and especially about my writing-table, at hours that were unconscionable for dusting, and now I believe that on those occasions he came to satisfy himself; he wanted to see if I had been able to work. When I could not eat my breakfast, he would appear in the middle of the morning with a cup of beef-tea, which he would set down beside me silently, and if I had not touched it when he returned he would quietly take it away, and come again later with something else. He never said a word, nor did I, except to thank him.

Larn-pidgin was naturally very much on the spot at this time, interpreting in his character of chorus. Larn-pidgin was a cynic without any conception of what we mean by disinterested affection.

"Ah Man tink you makee die," he told me one day cheerfully, "and he not get 'nother number one mis-sissee."

When I was in the last stage of the subtle disorder, and could no longer get up, his attentions redoubled. I had an English maid, but he came into my room as by right whenever he could frame a pretext, and watched my face furtively as I had seen him examine my writings, as if he would fain decipher the signs he could not comprehend. He was an artist in the arrangement of flowers, and would bring me fresh ones almost every day, each more exquisite than the last. It was all done, however, with a singular gravity. There was never a smile on his face, never a sign of any emotion; only his eyes

showed the intelligence within, but even they said no more than we see in the eyes of animals when they are watchful.

A friend of mine had an amah,* a nice woman, whom she often sent to me with messages at this time. Ah Man would show her in, but he always did it in a lordly way, as if he despised her. Larn-pidgin came continually, waiting and watching doubtless with the deepest interest for early symptoms of my dissolution. On one of these occasions I had been wondering why Ah Man was so ungracious to the comely amah, and I asked Larn-pidgin.

"Ah Man married † to her," he grunted contemptuously, as if he considered that being married to a woman was enough to account for any amount of ungraciousness.

The amah brought me some unbound numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine* one day, with a note from my friend entreating me to try and read the story, "Far from the Madding Crowd," that ran through them. She said it was by an anonymous writer, they thought George Eliot, and would revive me. I took up the first number without the slightest interest, merely to please her, and began to read. I had not looked at a book for weeks, and found it an effort at first, but by degrees all consciousness of strained attention wore off insensibly. I ceased, as it were, to read, and began to live in the book, and I found something neither visible nor definable, but perfectly perceptible to me, something vivifying, worth having, worth

* Woman servant.

† Married.

using, and more, worth contemplating in another, a power that wrought itself into feeling and claimed in me a humble kinship.

After the third number I sat up, and asked for strong tea and bread and butter. Next day I struggled on to a couch. At the end of a week my brain was busy again, and only the state of skin and bone to which I had been reduced remained to show that I had ever been ill.

Ah Man watched my progress with simmering excitement. When I sent for strong tea, he brought it himself, quite fussily for him. Later he tried champagne and an omelette as an experiment on his own account, and, finding it eminently successful, he redoubled his efforts; and every time he came in he eyed the orange covers of *Cornhill* with undisguised interest. At last, under an elaborate pretence of dusting, he managed to abstract one of the numbers, and retired with it to the next room. From where I was lying I could not see him through the door, but there was a mirror on the wall beside me which reflected his subsequent proceedings accurately, to my no small edification. When he thought himself out of sight, the dusting-brush fell from his hand as if he had forgotten that he held it, and he sat himself down in my special easiest chair, drew a pair of huge spectacles with tortoiseshell rims from his voluminous sleeve, adjusted them, and then proceeded to turn the pages of the magazine over conscientiously from beginning to end, looking up and down each carefully as if in search of something. I could see that the pictures excited a tragic interest in him. He gazed into them close to, then held them off a little, then raised them above the level of his eyes and looked

up to them, his face meanwhile intently set, and yet with a show of excitement on it, and a glow such as samshu brings to a Chinaman's cheeks; it was as if he had at last obtained something deeply desired, and was revelling in the first ecstasy of possession. He was not left long in peace to enjoy it, however, for Larn-pidgin was in the neighbourhood, patiently waiting till he should be thoroughly absorbed, when he stole a march on him from behind, tied a cracker to his pigtail, which was hanging down over his back of the chair, lighted it from a taper he had brought for the purpose, and retired with cautious precipitation to a distant post of observation to await events. When the cracker exploded, Ah Man bounced out of the chair, and the episode ended, so far as I could see, in hot pursuit of the evil one.

For the next few months the heat was excessive. By day it beat down upon us from a sky bare as a lidless eye of all solace of cloud, and at night it arose from the earth and radiated upwards. It seemed each day as if we could never endure another without a breath of fresh air, but we lived on nevertheless in the hope that the monsoon might change as by a miracle earlier than usual and relieve us. The longing for fresh air became such a passion at last that always when I slept I dreamt it was snowing. One day in particular I remember, when the heat seemed to come to a climax; a dark day it was, too, with a low, grey sky, but all the more oppressive on that account. Even the servants, methodical as they were, did as little as possible, and nobody else did anything but lounge about the house, too hot to talk, too exhausted to eat, but devoured with thirst, and conscious all the time of the

effort to endure. It might have been supposed, to look at us, that we were all a prey to a terrible suspense, so obviously were we waiting for something. After dark there was a slight decrease of temperature, and I took my weary self to bed early, in the hope of finding some relief in sleep. As usual I dreamt of ice and snow. I was on a great ship, approaching an iceberg. We were in imminent danger, and all was confusion. Officers and crew were making frantic efforts to keep the ship clear of the ice. She did not respond, however, but kept on her course at a fearful rate, and I held my breath, waiting for the collision. It came with a crash. The deck quivered. I started up in bed. Ah Man was standing over me, holding a little saucer of oil, in which burnt some slender strips of pith for a wick. With the feeble light flickering upon his sinister face, he looked grotesque as a bronze demon, yet it never occurred to me to be afraid of him.

"What you wanshee, Ah Man?" I demanded.

He held his head in a listening attitude significantly, and, following his example, I became aware of a tumult in the street, with cries and trampling as of excited people.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Dat earth hab catchee too muchee bad inside," he answered.

I could not think what he meant, but he had hardly spoken before there came an appalling uproar; it was as if a mighty engine were crashing along under the house and threatening to shake it down. No need to ask another question, although it was my first experience of an earthquake. Ah Man was shivering nervously.

“What shall I do?”

“Get up,” he answered laconically, and at the same time he handed me some garments that were lying on a chair, and held the light while I scrambled into them. Ah Man never stood upon ceremony, but indeed I think it is hardly necessary when there are earthquakes about.

A great stillness succeeded the shock, and it was evident to me as we hurried downstairs that only he and I and my English maid were left in the house; every one else had deserted it. Out in the street, among the howling Chinese, it was pandemonium let loose. The crowd was making for an open space on the hillside, and thither Ah Man piloted me safely. He found me a place among some decent amahs, and then all at once he disappeared. Two great shocks and some slighter ones succeeded each other during the night, and always after each the howls of the people were awful. In the intervals they let off fire-crackers and burnt joss-sticks* to propitiate the demons, but looked by the fitful flare and flash of these like the very worst of demons themselves. All eyes were turned towards the city as the dawn broke, and it emerged, as it were, out of darkness. There was little enough to see. Some of the buildings had fallen from the perpendicular, one here and there had collapsed altogether, great cracks appeared on others, and roofs had fallen in; but the damage looked old and accustomed already in the first glow of the sunrise.

I made my way back to our house alone. It was in the part of the town which had suffered most, and was

* Joss is a god.

cracked from top to bottom. I ascended the stairs nervously, and heard subdued voices muttering in my sitting-room, one wall of which had fallen forward into the verandah. There had been a heavy beam in the ceiling above my writing-table, and this had come down. Several servants were crowded together beside it, looking at something lying on the floor, but when they saw me they separated to let me see, and there, beneath the beam, face downwards, grasping a bundle of papers in his hand, but ghastly still, I recognised Ah Man. He had returned to rescue my wretched writings.

Larn-pidgin was there too, deeply interested in the details. When he saw me all overcome, he sidled up to me and explained, but less in his habitual character of chorus than in that of unctuous Christian convert, improving the occasion. "He tinkee you all same joss," he said, "dat Ah Man! He pay you joss-pidgin."* The obvious moral, according to Larn-pidgin, being that it would have been better for Ah Man had he kept himself from idols.

* Worship.

THE END.

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